

RENE LOUIS D'ARGENSON

**ESSAYS, CIVIL, MORAL, LITERARY AND
POLITICAL, WRITTEN AFTER THE MANNER OF M.
DE MONTAGNE; INTERSPERSED WITH
CHARACTERS, PORTRAITS, ANECDOTES, BY THE
CELEBRATED MARQUIS D'ARGENSON, MANY
YEARS PRIME MINISTER OF FRANCE; AND WHO
WAS HONOURED WITH THE PARTICULAR
INTIMACY OF THE. LATE KING OF PRUSSIA.
[DUBLIN EDITION]**

RENE LOUIS D'ARGENSON .

[3] ESSAYS, CIVIL, MORAL, LITERARY AND
POLITICAL, WRITTEN AFTER THE MANNER OF M.
DE MONTAGNE; INTERSPERSED WITH
CHARACTERS, PORTRAITS, ANECDOTES, BY THE
CELEBRATED MARQUIS D'ARGENSON, MANY
YEARS PRIME MINISTER OF FRANCE; AND WHO
WAS HONOURED WITH THE PARTICULAR
INTIMACY OF THE. LATE KING OF PRUSSIA.
[DUBLIN EDITION]

TRANSLATED FROM HIS VALUABLE
MANUSCRIPTS, AND NEVER BEFORE MADE
PUBLIC.

D U B L I N:

PRINTED BY WILLIAM PORTER,
FOR L. WHITE, P. BYRNE, P. WOGAN, C. LEWIS,
AND A. GRUEBIER.

M,DCC.LXXXIX

J.M. GALLANAR, éditeur

[4] ESSAYS, &c. REFLECTIONS AND
OBSERVATIONS MADE FROM READING AND
EXPERIENCE. CHARACTERS, PORTRAITS,
ANECDOTES, &c

ESSAY I.

INTRODUCTION.

I love Montagne, I read him with pleasure ; not that. I think always like him, but because he gives me room to reflect, and to adopt a like or a contrary opinion to that of his own. Madame de Sevigny said, when she read his Essays, she imagined she was walking with him in her garden, and that they were conversing together. I think so likewise; and I find that Montagne appears frequently to advance propositions in order to bring [4] on a little dispute which animates conversation, and renders it more lively and interesting: this is assuredly a good method of engaging the attention of the reader. I will strive to follow it, in composing a book as irregular, as full of loose propositions, as problematical, and as full of paradoxes, as that of Montagne. I will treat of every thing which falls under my pen, or comes into my mind; spring from branch to branch, exhaust no subject, and return at different times to the same. I wish my book should be read, as it was composed, in moments of leisure; that it should be taken up and laid down at every page, but that after being shut, each article should be reasoned upon. I shall think myself happy, if, in the midst of all this real or apparent disorder, there be found in me some of those advantages which Montagne enjoyed. I do not envy him his greatest qualities, nor the strokes of genius with which his book is decorated, nor the energy of his style ; but I dare assert, that I am like himself, a zealous friend to truth, to humanity, and to justice; that I am frank and honest in my words, writings, and actions; that I judge impartially the age in which I

live, my neighbour with mildness and indulgence, and my self with some caution ; for we ought not to be more severe with ourselves, than with others.

[5] ESSAY II.

MORALITY teaches us how we ought to live with men ; what a number of discourses, sermons and books there are, which instruct us in the first principles of it ! But there are few which teach us how to live with ourselves, and for ourselves alone: it is, because the matter and the lessons are in our own hearts, and depend upon our characters. There are people who have lived sixty years without ever having known themselves, because they have never been at the trouble of studying their characters ; for the most trifling research, is sufficient to give us that knowledge to perfection. Let it not be imagined, that self love hinders us from judging truly of our own character ; on the contrary, it informs us of our defects, and engages us to correct them, because our happiness is interested therein : it only hinders us from confessing them before others. Let us be sincere, we may be deceived about our defects, but we cannot totally conceal them.

ESSAY III.

On Imagination.

The imagination is a quality of the soul, not only a brilliant but an happy one, for it is more frequently the cause of our happiness, [6] than of our misery ; it presents us with more pleasures than vexations, with more hopes than fears. Men of dull and heavy dispositions, who are not affected by any thing, vegetate and pass their lives in a kind of tranquillity, but without pleasure or delight; like animals which see, feel and taste nothing but that which is under their eyes,

paws, or teeth; but the imagination, which is proper to man, transports us beyond ourselves, and makes us taste future and the most distant pleasures. Let us not be told, that it makes us also foresee evils, pains and accidents, which will perhaps never arrive: it is seldom that, imagination carries us to these panic fears, unless it be deranged by physical causes. The sick man sees dark phantoms, and has melancholy ideas; the man in health has no dreams but such as are agreeable, and as we are more frequently in a good, than a bad state of health, our natural state is to desire, to hope, and to enjoy. It is true, that the imagination, which gives us some agreeable moments, exposes us, when once we are undeceived, to others which are painful. There is no person who does not wish to preserve his life, his health, and his property; but the imagination represents to us our life, as a thing which ought to be very long; our health established and unchangeable; and our fortune inexhaustible: when the two latter of these illusions cease before the former, we are much to be pitied.

[7] ESSAY IV.

On Comparison.

We cannot judge well but by comparison; and we cannot compare metaphysical objects, (that is, those which fall not under the senses) but by reflecting upon ourselves, and by comparing the sentiments of others with our own from hence it comes to pass, that the first sentiment of an honest man, inclines him to believe that men in general are honest; and that of a vicious man, to believe. That all the world is ill disposed. Nothing but experience, knowledge of the world, of men, and of things, can bring us to a just manner of thinking in this respect; and still the different conjunctures, by which we may happen to be modified, considerably bias our judgment therein. In general, the best manner of judging men, is according to their interests; and the best method of persuading them, is to let them perceive how much it is their interest to do that which is proposed. It is not so easy to deceive them as may

be imagined ; those who wish to succeed therein, must give them no time for reflection. I have read the works of St. Evremond, a passage which appeared to me, equally agreeable and natural : “ I wished,” said he, “to write characteristic Tragedies and Comedies; but I have never been able to place my heroes in other situations than those in which I was myself; nor to give them other characters than my own: it was in vain that I gave to my personages, Greek, [8] Roman, Turkish, or French dresses, or that I called them by names taken from the histories of all those countries ; when my piece was finished, I perceived always that I had represented nobody but St. Evremond.”

ESSAY V.

On the Practice of Morality.

The Chinese are persuaded that there is but one science which merits to be profoundly studied, and that it is necessary to study it one's whole life; it is morality: from this results, say our relations of them, that all the Chinese are philosophers. I maintain, that these relations are not authentic ; it is neither true nor possible that they should be so ; and I should greatly pity a people, who passed their whole lives in the study of morality. The first year of their studies , they would know every thing necessary to be known; and when men obstinately pursue the study of a thing, which they possess in the most ample manner, they terminate in perplexity. What we ought to do during our lives, is not to study morality, but to practice it ; it may be very well practiced without being understood when we suffer ourselves to be conducted by those who know what it is; and much more so, when we are penetrated by its principles which are few in number, but universally acknowledged, for such a length of time past, to be good, that there is nothing more solid. Afterwards, it is necessary to apply them on every occasion; and to oppose [9] them to the fire of the passions, and to the trifling interests, which incline us to deviate from our duty. There are professions in routine of which it may be said, in parodying a verse of Boileau ; The practice is , and the art is difficult. It is quite

the contrary in morality; the knowledge of its principles is simple and easy ; but the practice is a difficulty which we experience every day.

It is not the vivacity only of our passions, of our character, and our age, which causes obstacles to the practice of morality, but circumstances also, difficult to be foreseen. However, at all events the wise man is prepared. It is particularly necessary when we are young, to reflect upon what we read and see ; to put ourselves in the place of people whom we hear speak, or what we know personally, and ask ourselves, what would we do were we in a like situation ? This is what is called studying historical books., and the great book of the world to advantage. I have for more than twenty years followed this method, and I am of opinion, that I am the better for it. Without ambition, or any ardent desire of changing my present situation, I like, notwithstanding, to build castles in the air: they amuse me and give me no uneasiness: they are agreeable dreams which never make me start out of sleep, or give me the nightmare. My friend, the Abbe de Saint Pierre, dreams continually that he is reforming the state; I have a little more right than he has to form such dreams. He writes and publishes what he dreams of; I am tempted to do so likewise; but I answer for it, that my dreams shall not be brought to light during my existence; first, because I do believe the world disposed to make use of that which I think is for its advantage; secondly, because the example of the Abbe de St. Pierre frightens me. With the best [10] intentions, he has given much advice which would well deserve to be followed; but he has attacked, in front, generally received ideas; he has proposed impracticable means of arriving at happy ends; he has announced his ideas in an emphatical tone ; and he has believed that to be well expressed, they have need of new words and an extraordinary orthography ; all this has thrown a ridicule upon his writings, and person ; and it was only by passing for a fool and a dotard, that he avoided the hatred of those whose interest it was to maintain the abuses which he was willing to destroy. It cannot be denied, that he merited, in several respects, reproaches and even derision; but assuredly it was possible to reap some advantage from his

ideas upon several objects, and to turn to a good account his idle speculations. A fine example for those who would still wish to publish projects of reform : but ought this to frighten a good citizen? No! at least, it will not hinder me from thinking, and even writing, were it but for myself, that which shall appear to me best to be done.

ESSAY VI.

On Imaginary Idea.

There are chimeras which elevate the soul, and incline the mind to fortify itself with great and noble ideas ; when a man believes himself destined to do great things, he is never guilty of a mean action ; he conceives no low projects, or any of which he is ashamed. A young officer, who [11] aspires to the command of an army, strives to improve himself in tactics ; he studies the great art of war, and if he does not become a general, he succeeds at least so far as to command a troop or a detachment. A young magistrate, who thinks he has sense and abilities enough to attain the height of his profession, applies himself seriously to gain information, and lives at the same time to render himself agreeable to protectors in power; if he arrives not entirely at the end he proposes, he reaps at least, a part of the fruit of his labour and hopes. The young clerk in a court of justice, who has seen a few celebrated advocates make great fortunes; the student in anatomy, who has seen the first surgeon to the King die and leave upwards of an hundred thousand pounds ; the apprentice, who has seen the shop of his master so well accustomed, that there was annually sold therein, merchandise to the amount of forty thousand pounds ; all these people are completely happy, if they have a hope, frequently chimerical of doing the same thing. The desire of succeeding, the conviction even that we shall succeed, the enthusiasm of our profession, or calling, are powerful incentives, which stimulate us to great actions. We must not be disheartened ; we must indulge hope, give an incessant application, and not cease to merit new recompenses, till we have obtained all that we can desire. There are none but fools, who after having made trifling efforts, and given some feeble proofs of their

abilities, wait quietly by their fire-side for honour and the price of their services, and complain of the injuries they have suffered. Whoever has not the courage to suffer many, does not merit to be in the end recompensed by a brilliant success.

[12] If we have not the noble emulation of rising above our equals, we must confine ourselves to peaceful and social virtues, and use with discretion the fortune we have received from our fathers, if we be not willing to augment it ; we should make ourselves loved in our families, esteemed in the neighbourhood, and enjoy the pleasures of a limited society.

ESSAY VII

On Characteristic Models for Imitation.

A wise and just man looks upon every dishonest means of enriching himself as impossible; and upon every project which he is unable to accomplish, as a real folly ; but even in the last case he may caress chimeras, and assure himself with them, as we read a romance, without hoping to become the hero of it ; or relations of voyages, without having the least inclination to go to sea, and leave our native country. It is in this manner that I put myself, sometimes in the place of those whose history I read ; I figure to my mind the situations they have been in, and ask myself if I should have got as happily out of them as they did ? Were I a king, I sometime say, should such a prince be my model ? Were I a general of an army, should I conduct myself like such or such a famous warrior ? If I were a minister or a magistrate, should I adopt the principles which certain persons in those situations of my acquaintance appear [13] to have followed ? As I love to write what I think, especially when I presume that I can do it with advantage, I have made an infinity of notes from what I have read; and from conversations with people who were or are of great consideration in the world, and with

whom I have been intimately connected; I mean to make use of these notes in order to fill up this volume.

I have frequently sought, among my acquaintance, some person who might serve me for a model; but I have not yet found one which is perfect, and to whom I could wholly attach myself. The more particularly I have known the people I would fain have imitated, the more I was convinced that they were in many points far from that degree of perfection to which I was studious to arrive, Finally, I perceived that I ought to imitate Praxiteles, who, willing to make his Venus a real chef d'oeuvre, did not confine himself to a single beauty. Although there were charming girls in Athens, and that he had Phryne before his eyes, he chose in a number, that which each of them had in the greatest perfection, and made of so many united attractions, a statue, which has been judged to be the finest piece of workmanship produced by the hands of man.

Besides, if even I found models capable of satisfying me, and if I were absolutely in their situation, I should carefully avoid copying them servilely: a copyist is in a subaltern and abject state, however excellent may be the original. A free and noble imitation is alone worthy of a man, who feels elevated, and believes that he has some genius.

[14] ESSAY VIII.

On the Utility of Plutarch's Lives.

The lives of Plutarch, if read attentively, are of all those of ancient authors, the most capable of engaging young persons to make reflections ; and for which reason they seldom fail to do it : they would wish to be alternately Aristides, Lucullus, Scipio, Alcibiades, or Socrates; but independently that such ideas pass very rapidly, these

personages lived in an age and a country so different from ours, that there are not many applications to be made of our manner of thinking and acting to theirs. The parallels even that Plutarch strove to make of the Greeks and the Romans, are neither very just nor useful ; because there was already too great a difference between the manners of the two nations, and the situations of their heroes. Nevertheless, we of the eighteenth century may reap some benefit, by considering these people dead, two thousand years ago, at three thousand live hundred leagues distance from us.

If I had a model in antiquity to follow, it should be Julius Agricola, father-in law of Tacitus. In supposing that his son-in-law has not overcharged his portrait, this great man has given the example of an individual, who, after having served his country with honour, uprightness and disinterestedness, in the highest degree possible, finding himself obliged to renounce the satisfaction of being useful to the public, devoted himself to the exercise of social virtues ; made his family and a society of chosen friends happy, in the midst of [15] which he was solely concentrated ; and sighed in secret, because he was persuaded, that to cry aloud against the evils which he could not remedy, was to increase them. My son, to whom I have communicated my manner of thinking with respect to Agricola, is of a different opinion; he has found in ancient history, other personages more worthy of being taken for models, and I excuse him on account of his youth and situation. He is just beginning his career, and mine is perhaps already too far advanced ; before we think of going to bed, it is necessary at least to have dined.

I shall never forget some passages of in the life of Agricola his father-in-law : I will transcribe them in my own language, for I am of opinion, that they have not yet been translated in such a manner as they deserve.

" Agricola* [*The reader will be pleased to consider, that this passage from Tacitus comes into English from the

French of M. d'Argenson. M. d'Argenson being of opinion, that no good translation of it had ever been given, the translator chose in this case, rather to make M. d'Argenson his original than Tacitus.] being young, was excessively fond of study ; perhaps more so than a man destined to a military life and public affairs ought to be : but his mother regulated his searing inclination by sciences and letters. Afterwards, age and reflection moderated his ardor, and gave him that justness of taste for philosophy, which is proper for a Statesman.”

“The people, whom he was charged to govern, did not remark in his conduct either humour, arrogance, or avarice : he was moderate and reasonable ; and what is exceedingly rare, his goodness lost him none of the people's respect, nor his severity their affection.

[16] “Although he was obliged to increase the contributions, in order to provide for the subsistence of his army, he made them supportable by an equitable division, and suppressed vexatious prosecutions, which bear heavier upon the people than even impositions.”

" Being returned home, after having filled the most honourable functions, he strove by the most simple and modest exterior appearance, to make his great name and actions to be forgotten. He exercised himself in the practice of private virtues, in the bosom of his family and among his friends ; many people on seeing Agricola, sought in him the great man, and few discovered him at first sight.”

“The affairs of the Empire becoming worse, the public voice called Agricola to his country's assistance ; these cries struck incessantly the ears of the Emperor. Some perform communicated them to him by way of advice ; others repeated them through malignity, and with a view of irritating the prince against a man whom they had

already unjustly slandered.--It was thus that the virtues of Agricola concurred equally in loading him with honour, and precipitating his ruin."

" Agricola was easy about the fate which hung over him ; he did not brave the power of Domitien, and feared as little the evil he was capable of doing him ; he sighed for the fate of his country only, and this he did in secret. Let us learn by his example, that there is a kind of particular heroism for those who live under the empire of tyrants : it consists in not precipitating ourselves foolishly into useless dangers, but in preparing ourselves to support every accident to which we are exposed under bad princes."

[17] "If posterity wish to know something of the person of Agricola, he was rather proportionably formed than of a graceful figure ; his physiognomy inspired confidence ; his air was rather affable and polite than imposing ; it was sufficient to look at him, to know that he was an honest man ; and people were not astonished when they discovered that he was a great man. His career was not very long, if the ordinary course of life be considered, as he died at the age of fifty years ; but on examining the use he made of his time, he lived to a great age. Honoured with the consulate, and in-vested with the triumphal robe, he had no other honour to desire ; without being very rich, he was sufficiently so to support his rank. He preserved till his death, his virtues, his reputation, the affections of his relations and friends, and the esteem of the public : finally it may be said, that he gained happily a good port at the eve of storms and tempests."

ESSAY IX.

Character of Agricola and Pomponius Aitticus.

If I was pleased with the life of Agricola, and wished to take him for my model, my son was as much so with the life of Pomponius Atticus, which I made him read in Cornelius Nepos. He came to tell me, that the conduct of this wise Roman was that which he would imitate: my reply to him was as follows : " You do not yet, my son, perceive [18]the difficulty there is in living as happily as Pomponius Atticus did, in such critical circumstances. You do not conceive the danger there is in taking no part in civil wars. Can a man flatter himself with the idea of being equally esteemed by both parties, to have friends in one and the other, to render service to all, and not to be suspected by any ? It is almost impossible, when a person possesses rank in life, and pretends to some consideration, to act such a part. To meddle with nothing, is all that the ignorant and obscure can do, and in thanking heaven for their insignificance ; but others are obliged to explain themselves : I am firmly of opinion, that it is their duty, to make known their manner of thinking, when they have employment which require they should do it ; and when they can contribute to support the lawful party and resist the unlawful one. I am persuaded that Atticus was blamed, that he was accused of indifference and apathy Cornelius Nepos says something of it ; it was asserted, and perhaps with truth, that he made his court to the tyrants ; but that which saved Atticus, was the constant equality of his philosophy ; it did not change for a moment; and not the least word escaped him, " either against Sylla, in favour of Brutus, or against Marc Antony. He died at seventy-seven years of age, the friend of Augustus ; although he had calmly seen Caesar assassinated in a full senate, he had no part in the conspiracy, but on the other hand he took no means to revenge his death.*"[*Pomponius Atticus did what was still worse ; Cicero, his intimate friend, who wrote him so many fine letters, whose brother was his son-in-law, was proscribed and assassinated. fascinated by order of Antony. Fulvia, wife of this Triumvir, caused the head of Cicero to be brought to her, tore out the tongue, which had pronounced the Philippics, and by a refinement of barbarity, pierced it several times with her needle. Pomponius Atticus was not only unconcerned at this, but sometime afterwards, Fulvia being embarrassed in her circumstances, having lost her husband, he promised her,

did her essential services, and declared himself her steadfast friend.]

[19] " Ah my son, it is carrying indifference to a culpable degree ! Moreover, dare you flatter yourself with being like Atticus, so amiable as to be equally sought after by both parties ? Either it is necessary to be absolutely innocent, or to have such fine qualities as are capable of making trifling errors to be forgotten. For my part, I avow that I do not believe I am capable of conducting myself like Pomponius Atticus.—If I were unfortunate enough to live at a time when my country was divided into two parties, I think I could not do otherwise than declare myself in favour of the best ; especially if I were powerful, rich, and young enough to be of service to it."

ESSAY X.

Comparison of Lycurgus and St. Francis D'Assise.

In reading the life of Lycurgus, in Plutarch, and the history of Lacedemon, I could not but call to mind an odd comparison, and without doubt ridiculous, which I have somewhere read ; it is a[20] well drawn and very droll parallel, between Lycurgus and Saint Francis D'Assise. The principles of these two legislators are, it is said, the same ; the Lacedemonians made vows like the capuchin friars; namely , 1st, that of poverty, or at least disappropriation, since they held all their property in common, lands, provisions, buildings and cloaths; gold and silver were forbidden them ; if there were any at Lacedemon, they belonged to the State.-- 2d. With respect to the vow of obedience, it was no where better observed than in Sparta ; the soldier was kept in the most exact discipline; the people had no part in the government; it was composed of monarchy and aristocracy : the kings represented the provincial and the guardian,*[* Officers or inspectors belonging to the order of Saint Francis.] the

ephor the defensor. 3d. It is not so easy to prove, that the Lacedemonians made a vow of chastity ; for it is well known they had usages and customs quite contrary : but the principal object of the institutors of orders, and by which they bound each member of a religious society, and that of the Latin church, (which subjected in like manner all its priests,) was to take away the right of inheritance, and to concentrate, or rather extend in general society, the interest divided otherwise among families.

Such was the spirit of the laws of Lycurgus, as well as that of Saint Francis: men forget on entering into that order, their fathers and mothers; they abjure the ties of consanguinity ; they are not even attached to any particular convent ; they are cosmopolites as far as the world of Saint Francis reaches. The spirit of the institutions of Lycurgus is lost, like that of the rules of the Saint; every thing becomes corrupted, and is in the end destroyed, and generally by the same causes.

[21] The Lacedemonians found their manner of living too austere ; they envied their neighbours the agreeable life they enjoyed, and thought that having conquered them, they ought like them, to enjoy their riches. In like manner, the monks having made themselves respected, admired, and esteemed, thought to take advantage of the consideration they had in the world, in order to enrich, if not their persons, at least their monasteries. The mendicants even are become rich and proprietors. Philosophy, sciences and arts which produce ease and convenience, corrupted Athens, and ruined Lacedemon ; so the Cordeliers have been admitted into the University of Paris, and have there canvassed for the honours of doctorship : no means are left of reconciling these fine titles with the very austere life they ought to lead, and the extreme poverty of which they have made profession. Different reforms have been in vain attempted to reduce the monks to their first institution. Finally, having quite lost the virtues of their order, it is easy to foresee, that in a little time there will be no more monks than Spartans.

ESSAY XL.

Portraits of Aristides, and Alcibiades .

I have just read with the greatest pleasure, in Plutarch, the two lives and portraits of Aristides, and Alcibiades: these two illustrious Athenians form a perfect contrast; but their characters are equally worth studying, and it is even useful to compare them, and to make of their different kinds of merit, application to the age in which we live.

[22] The renown of arms was not that of Aristides : – he served in the army, at first as a private soldier, or subaltern officer:—he conducted himself bravely, as every good citizen charged, as far as in his power, with the defence of his country, ought to do ; but he was not ambitious of commanding, and served his fellow citizens better with his head than with his arms. Always modest; contented to shew his talents when he was charged with the execution of any particular duty, or consulted upon any affair ; he ceded the honour of rank to him who wished to possess it ; nevertheless, he could not so far hide his merit as to prevent its being justly admired. Eschylus having introduced into one of his tragedies the following Greek verses,—" He will not appear just, but he will be so." The people turned towards Aristides, discovered in him this character, and immediately gave their applause. The public esteem met him, if the expression may be allowed and accompanied him without his ever seeking for it. He had a violent enemy, and so much the more dangerous, as he was a person of no mean consideration : this was Themistocles. He made it a rule to contradict every thing which Aristides proposed; and Aristides took the resolution of getting others to propose that which he thought advantageous to the Republic. Notwithstanding all his merit, we know that Aristides could not save himself from the rigour of the ostracism ; a severe law, introduced into the Republic of Athens, with the view of maintaining equality. His great reputation of justice and understanding

gave umbrage to his fellow citizens: he went into exile, praying that Athens might never be in a situation to regret his absence. His prayers were not [23] heard :—Aristides was soon wanted, and recalled. Themistocles, like a great politician, went to meet him, and promised him every kind of deference and proof of attachment. Aristides, more sincere in his professions, answered : " Command " me in war,—you are a general,—I will obey " you like a brave officer. When we than be returned to Athens, let each of us take in the deliberations, that part which his ideas shall suggest." In short, the year following, Themistocles conceived a bold and brilliant project, which might succeed ; yet it was not quite conformable to the rules of justice : the people consulted Aristides upon it ; he told them freely what he thought; and the Athenians rejected it. So true it is, that the people, when they have time to reflect, and are temperate, conduct themselves in the most just and upright manner. The virtue and reason of Aristides made an epocha; and when the morals of Greece were become totally corrupted, the time of Aristides was quoted, in order to refer to the age of upright men. During the reign of the Emperors at Rome, the age of Cato was likewise spoken of, in referring to the time when this Censor defended the laws and ancient customs of the Roman Republic ; but Cato was uncouth and austere,—Aristides gentle and humane. *[*It does not appear that Aristides either studied philosophy, or that he associated with philosophers; the Academy and the Lyceum, were not established at the time in which he lived; philosophy was natural to him, and not acquired: his justice was founded upon the virtue of his mind, and the uprightness of his heart. Since the death of Aristides, there have, perhaps, been many men, who, born with as much virtue, rectitude of mind and heart as he was, have perverted these happy gifts, by studying to reason too profoundly upon the nature and extent of their duties, and by comparing them with their interests.] Another Athenian, endowed with [24] more brilliant qualities than Aristides, enjoyed during his life, and even a long time after his death, the greatest reputation; this was Alcibiades, whole character, &c. I will extract, as I have done that of Aristides from Plutarch.

ESSAY XII.

Character of Alcibiades.

Alcibiades gave in his youth proofs of what he was one day to become: he was courageous, intrepid, ambitious, haughty, and pre-dominant; but knowing, on great occasions, how to temper his passions by policy ;—witty, lively, full of grace and agreeableness, but having an appearance of being dissipated and imprudent : of a charming figure, made to inspire love, which in effect he did, appearing to return all the sentiments he caused in others; but he was too much master of his passions to be governed by them. He made his unrestrained ardour for pleasure subservient to his reputation, ambition and interests. Fond of wealth, although rich, and sometimes thought extravagant. He cultivated the arts, and gleaned from the belles lettres, full enough to make him amiable : he studied philosophy : Socrates, the wisest of men, was his master, and so well pleased in giving him lessons, that in another sense, Alcibiades was the master of Socrates.

[25] He was married, and not very faithful to his wife (Hipparete;) she imitated those who had upon Alcibiades less legal rights, and pardoned his inconstancy and errors on account of his agreeable qualities. Every talent was natural to him, as the virtues were to Aristides; therefore, he knew in case of need, how to counterfeit all that Aristides really practised. Particular circumstances were the cause of his going to Lacedemon : and in that city, the rival of his country, and whose manners formed a perfect contrast with those of the Athenians, he appeared for some time to become a perfect Spartan; but he was only a fox clothed in the skin of a lion. He had metamorphosed his exterior only: he seduced the wise of the good King Agis ; and so far from the Spartans converting him, it was he who corrupted them: He went among the Persians, and appeared to be born to live in the court of a despotic King. A pliant courtier, he cringed at the feet of him who was

matter: daring and haughty towards the Satraps, he proved to them that he had as much or more right than they had to favour, and to all the advantages which men acquire in a monarchy; after his return to his own country, he dazzled his fellow citizens with his magnificence; but he delighted them with the title he introduced into the feasts which he gave them. The Athenians were capable of pardoning every thing in favour of the graces : nobody had this resource more at hand than Alcibiades. His end was tragical; but he proved to his latest moment that he was intrepid: besieged in his hook by the Persians, covered with their arrows, he expired ; and it was the beautiful Timandra who closed his eyes, and took care of his interment [26] having read there portraits, and turning our eyes towards the age and country in which we live, we cannot but discover that we have still some similar to Alcibiades, but none to Aristides. The 16th century produced a few of them, and they were acknowledged to be such ; because in time of disorder and civil war, men who have as much firmness as virtue, who have principles, and who are obliged to defend them, (new themselves without disguise; but when every thing seems calm and peaceful, valour sleeps, and heroic virtue shines forth no longer. In countries where there are neither lions nor dragons, who knows if there be men that would be capable of taming them ; but where no monsters are seen, insects are in swarms; which it is more difficult to disperse than to kill ferocious animals.

Our age is capable of producing men like Alcibiades.—Are there among us any perfect copies of this brilliant model? If I be not deceived, I know one of them among my contemporaries : may my great grand children admire and love him as I do !

[27] ESSAY XIII.

The Eloquence and Character of Demosthenes.

I read the harangues of Demosthenes with all possible pleasure, and his life with pain. I saw in him a man of the greatest abilities, and the finest and most lively eloquence; but I perceived that the qualities of his heart did not answer to those of his understanding. The first time he mounted the rostrum, it was to plead against his guardians, he did not succeed, because, he accumulated too many arguments one upon the other, overcharged his pleading with oratorical figures, and had a bad delivery. For my part, I think his cause was not a good one : a young man like Demosthenes, ought to have found his judges disposed to hearken to him, when he complained, that advantage had been taken of his weakness to deprive him of his property. It appears that, far from being disheartened by this bad success, Demosthenes took infinite pains to become more able and seducing. Sometime after, not having yet obtained a good delivery, he composed for others ; and in a cause wherein the Areopagites were greatly embarrassed, because the pleading on both sides were of equal force, it was discovered, that Demosthenes had drawn up both the one and the other: he was thus an advocate for and against. What opinion can we have of the heart of such an orator! At length he found himself capable of opposing [28] every thing which Phocion proposed, who wanted neither wit nor eloquence, and whose opinions were more just and of greater advantage to the Athenians. Demosthenes had talents still greater than those of Phocion ; he got the better of him, and his successes were the cause of the loss of his country. Ought he not to reproach himself with such a triumph ? When Demosthenes wanted argument and reason, it frequently happened, that he got rid of his embarrassment by pleasantry. This kind of resource would appear less extraordinary and difficult to the French to make use of, than to other nations.

His advice was to go war, although the Athenians were not in a situation to do it ; it was however resolved upon. Obligated like others to join the army, he was the first who shrank from his duty and ran away. He had harangued like a bad citizen, and he fought like a cowardly soldier. Nevertheless the Athenians recalled him to the rostrum,

they wished to hear again this divine orator. Frivolous people ! who admired nothing but the choice of words and turn of phrases, without giving themselves the least trouble about the object of the discourse. It was, however, the welfare of the republic which was in question. Philip being dead, Demosthenes maintained, that nothing was to be feared from the young Alexander; that he was only a foolish boy, (according to the expression of M. de Toureil.) The wits of Athens smiled, and gave their applause : it appeared by what followed, how far this judgment of Alexander was founded on truth. The King of Macedon destroyed Thebes, and forgave Athens, on account only of the arts,—of letters and philosophy ; but he required that the orators who had insulted him should be given up, Demosthenes was the most culpable; he [29] was greatly afraid, and did what he could to save himself the trouble of the journey: he invented, and declaimed wonderfully, on the fable of the shepherds, whom the wolves prayed to give up their dogs. Demosthenes was by no means a man precious to his republic; yet he managed so as to prevail upon his countrymen to pay a considerable sum, rather than abandon him to the resentment of the King of Macedonia. Alexander took the money from the Athenians, left them their orator, and made a very good bargain.

The Conqueror having taken Sardes from the King of Persia, found proofs that Demosthenes was pensioned by the enemies of his country,—in a word, a traitor. He made this known to the Athenians, who only laughed at it: in fact, it did not hinder Demosthenes from being the best speaker in Greece ; and the Athenians pardoned every thing in favour of wit and abilities.

He was one day to plead against a certain Harpalus, whom the Athenians wished to banish from their city, and who fully deserved it : the culprit gave an elegant gold cup to the orator. The next day, Demosthenes declared that he had a cold, and could not plead : I believe it, said Phocion, thou hast got in thy throat the cup of Harpalus. This

repartee was thought an excellent one; but it was all that passed upon the subject.

When we read Demosthenes, we are so delighted, that we do not think of weighing his reasons; but, on reading history, their weakness is seen, in putting ourselves in the place of the Athenians. Phocion, on the contrary, spoke rationally, and always to the purpose. Hyperides said to Phocion, When wilt thou then think of going to war ?

[30] " When those in years, answered the sage Athenian, shall know how to command, and the young how to obey; when the rich shall be disposed to contribute their property, and the poor their arms. When orators shall no longer display their wit and talents at the expense of the republic! " These are sublime sentiments, and which present at once, the evils and their remedies.

Demosthenes, on the contrary, began his harangues, by saying, " Athenians, the Oracle of Delphi has declared, that there was one man in Athens, who was of a different opinion from all the others; are you desirous to know this man---I am he." This is certainly a fine rhetorical figure; but afterwards, Demosthenes was obliged to use great subtlety, to prove that he was right, in being of an opinion different from that of all his fellow citizens.—How could the Athenians have been so far imposed upon, as to seize that which was false, and never that which was true ? It is certain, that Demosthenes deceived them.

I like Cicero much better; every thing in his pleadings breathes sentiment, equity, and a justness of mind: his logic is clear, and at the same time pressing. It seems by his manner, as if one honest man was defending another; and nothing proves to us that Cicero strove to deceive the Romans, nor that he supported a bad cause.

The Roman orator had great personal defects; he was

weak in council and in government, and gave way to times and circumstances ; but he was not strenuous for the bad party, and if he had not the courage to save his country from falling, he did not lead it to the brink of the precipice. He was vain, and believed that he had saved [31] Rome, by discovering the conspiracy of Catiline; but as he boasted too much of a trifling service, he had nothing to reproach himself with. Something should be granted in favour of humanity, and several weaknesses ought to be excused on its account.

ESSAY XIV.

Characters of the two Catos, compared.

I have read the lives of the two Catos with an intention of judging to which of them the expression, afterwards a proverb, He is as wise as Cato, was most applicable : and I think Cato of Utica, ought to be preferred to his grandfather. In order to form a better judgment, let us compare their actions, considering at the same time their respective situations. The Censor was more austere, and lived at a time when it was less necessary to be so : consequently, his austerity might be suspected of proceeding from a particular turn of mind. He gained at first, some reputation as an orator ; but it was because he was very violent in his pleadings against the adverse parties : shewed an excessive zeal for virtue and the laws, and criticised severely, those who acted contrary to either. He was named Questor, in the army of Scipio Africanus; and disapproved of the most trifling recompence, which that General wished to make to his soldiers. Scipio very justly observed, he thought himself more responsible for the success of the great enterprizes [32] with which he was charged, than the oeconomy of the public treasure. Cato fell into a passion, and abandoned both the Questorship and the army. When he was Praetor, he was a judge of the most perfect integrity ; but his severity was insupportable. Arrived at the honours of the Consulship, he was sent into Spain, where he soon found himself surrounded with

enemies, which he owed, perhaps to the stubbornness of his character. Perceiving that it was necessary to relax from this severity, he took out from the public treasure two hundred talents, with which he corrupted part of the Spaniards, and opposing them to each other, conquered them all ; razed the walls of their cities, and received in Rome triumph; honours. After having been ten years Consul, he solicited the Censorship, which he obtained : and never was that place filled with so much intrepidity and rigour as by Cato. He paid no respect to persons, Senators, knights, or men of Consular dignity : he drove from the senate those whom he found culpable, of whatever birth they were. He was exact, severe, incorruptible, inflexible and resolute : he made himself dreaded by those who infringed the laws; but he did not render the execution of them easy.—he took no pains to make them esteemed, and never thought of rewarding those who conformed to what they prescribed. He declared war against luxury, not by publishing any sumptuary law, but by taxing the citizens according to their expenses: without paying the least attention to their real fortunes. At the end of his Censorship a statue was erected to him, and he received the surname of Censor, which he bore the remainder of his life ; and preserved the inclination of censuring and criticising his countrymen. He [33] made it a duty, and perhaps a pleasure, to accuse them in open senate: this was repaid him, —he was accused in his turn,—and it happened, that he was more than once condemned to pay a fine. He was already advanced in age, when the Athenians came to Rome, and made it the fashion to study the literature and philosophy of Greece. Cato disapproved of this study,—he opposed its progress,—and cried loudly, that it was a species of mental luxury, which would ruin the republic. He went into Africa, and lived at Carthage, between the second and third punic wars. He saw that this old rival of Rome was full of flourishing youth; that the country was populous, rich and commercial :—finally, that if Carthage was left too long in repose, it might again make Rome tremble, as it had done in the time of Hannibal from that moment, he gave it in the senate as his opinion, that Carthage should be destroyed ; and he was the cause of the third punic war, which was terminated by the entire destruction of that city. Cato died

at the age of ninety, without having ever been ill, or had recourse to medicine.

Many things may he said against this austere Censor of the vices and manners of his country : he took up for his model, Curius Dentatus, a Roman in the beginning of the republic; who was three times Consul, received twice triumphal honours, but returned always after his victories to the plough, and lived humbly in his farms. It was this Curius, who receiving from certain ambassadors considerable offers of gold and silver, shewed them his kettle full of radishes and greens, saying, " Judge if a man who is contented with " such a repast, has need of your riches."

[34] Cato affected to lead as frugal a life ; but Curius, by living in this manner, only imitated his countrymen and contemporaries, Cincinnatus, Fabricius, Camillus, &c. instead of which, Cato made himself singular, and wished to be remarkable. We have some fragments of his writings ; vanity, affection of singularity, excessive economy and even avarice, are manifested in them. He wrote upon a country life, and said, that nothing was so agreeable as augmenting our patrimony, and becoming rich ; that slaves were the instruments of labour, of culture, of economy and commerce; that they ought to be made use of to improve our fortune, and not to be considered but with this view. Plutarch, however indulgent he might be to those whole life he wrote, could not refrain from blaming this manner of thinking, which he looked upon to be inhuman and unjust.

It is remarked that Cato, who condemned so many vices during the course of his severe Censorship, was favourable to those with which he was himself was infected ; such as usury, which, it is asserted, he mailed, in the most oppressive manner. When he was reproached with it, he answered, that there was no Law which forbade it expressly : it might be so at that time, but did it become Cato to attach himself strictly to the letter of the law, and

not to distinguish that which was just and fitting, from what was not so ?—Cato the Censor, was, therefore, self-interested, avaricious, full of vanity, and perhaps, jealous of the great and powerful personages whom he persecuted openly. He was severe to equals, and inhuman to his inferiors : finally, his virtue was austere and cruel ; which, as Montagne says, with reason, is a trite and [35] foolish ornament for philosophy. What are called his Distichs, are full of good sense and reason ; but they are certainly not by Cato the Censor : let us see if they do not better become his grandson.

Cato of Utica, lived in times less happy than those of his grandfather; and although the age in which he lived had no particular defect, he criticised it much more by being virtuous, than by declaiming seriously against vices. His wisdom was neither cynical, jealous nor haughty. He sought not riches, but made use of those he had, in being generous and liberal on proper occasions; equally incapable of a blind friendship, and an inveterate hatred : he loved above all things, justice and the Republic. He was, when very young, under the tyranny of Sylla : and it is said of him, that he asked, of every body he met, a sword to plunge into the bosom of that oppressor of his country. Forty years afterwards he killed himself, rather than be obedient to Caesar. He saw, especially in a Republic, that dignities were not vain honours, but real charges ; for the exercise of which, men were answerable to their country. He was at first Questor, as his grandfather had been, and he conducted himself in that office like an honest man, without being more difficult than was necessary, preserving the good application of public money to rigid ceremony. A virtue which never ceases for an instant, cannot fail of being known; for which reason, he enjoyed the reputation he merited ; but the Republic was not very anxious to employ him a second time; his way of thinking, far from being agreeable to his fellow citizens, inspired them with fear. He was himself little desirous of making a figure ; but seeing [36] the people ready to elect for tribune an unworthy citizen, and fearing the evils which might be the consequence, he presented himself with confidence, and was created. In fact, he found himself in a situation to

prevent, under the pretence of the conspiracy of Catiline, the recall of Pompey and his army to Rome, who was at war with Mithridates, and who had not yet conquered that fierce enemy of the Romans. If this proposition had succeeded, on one hand, the great object of the Asiatic war would have been lost, for want of giving it the lost succours ; and on the other, Rome would have been overcome by Pompey, instead of being disturbed by Catiline —Cato deferred at least the ruin of his country, in preventing, for the moment, the return of Pompey with all his troops to Rome. He was near being assassinated on this occasion by those of the opposite party, which included almost all the Roman citizens, few of them foreseeing the consequences. The coolness and steady resolution of Cato, at length opened their eyes, and they saved him from the hands of the other party. Pompey, informed of what had passed, returned to Rome, and found that Cato was a man whom it was absolutely necessary to manage: he sought his alliance, and asked his niece in marriage for his son; Cato refuted him. I will not give, said he, an hostage to Pompey, against his country: when his party shall be the most just, it shall be mine. He kept his word, as long as Pompey, Caesar and Crassus, were united, for the purpose of tyrannising over Rome; he was the enemy of them all. Pompey frequently got him reproached for it; he always replied, that in his actions he never consulted either friendship or personal enmity, and that he had not, nor ever should have, any thing in view but [37] the welfare of the Republic. All parties perceiving, equally, that it was impossible to gain him over to them, they agreed to exclude him from the Consulship; and this man, fitter than any other, to govern Rome was never at the head of affairs. I do not know if this was a great evil to Rome ; he would probably have retarded the ruin of the Republic but for a very little time.—However this may be, the name of the second Cato, to the shame of the Consular Calendars, is not inscribed therein.

At length, the time which Cato the Wise had foreseen, came to past. The tyrants of Rome were reduced to two, Caesar and Pompey ; the latter was conquered, and from that moment Cato took his part, or rather, as he says

himself, he followed not Pompey, but attached himself to the remains of the Republic. It was contrary to his advice that Pompey gave battle at Pharsalia.—Cato could not wish for a combat which was at all events to give a master to Rome. However, the armies met, much against his will ; Caesar conquered, and was from that moment the enemy of Cato. We know, the latter retired to Utica, and seeing this last place of Africa obliged to submit, he put himself to death, with a coolness and heroism which have made his act of suicide the model of those past, present, and to come.

What is principally to be considered in the death of Cato, is to know if he did well in quitting life. A Christian cannot debate upon such a point ; but Pagan authors have thought that Cato ought to have preserved himself for the Republic. For my part, putting myself in their place, I think naturally, that Cato of Utica took a good resolution. The liberty of his country was the object of all his desires and affections; which may, by force, [38] some, be deemed a foible, for every person has one. He saw the liberty of Rome destroyed ; in living a longer time he would have seen that, which he looked upon as a public misfortune, aggravated. Caesar would have pardoned him, but he would have been under an obligation to Caesar; and it is less painful to a man of spirit to finish his existence, than to kiss the hand of the tyrant who permits him to live.

It appears that Cato was a philosopher of the sect of the Stoics, whose principles have sometimes been carried to a ridiculous degree, but well understood, they are sublime and excellent. Those of the Epicureans, well conceived, tend likewise to make men wise and happy. Cato the Stoic, feared neither death nor pain,—such were the dogmas of the sect ; but he still less sought for, than feared them : therefore, he did nothing in his life which tended to give him useless pain, chagrin, or contradiction. When they happened to him, he supported them courageously. He never meddled with state affairs, but when he thought himself called upon to do so : and as soon as he saw that he could no longer be of use to his country, and that he should be deprived of the enjoyments of a private life, because he

had taken too great a part in public affairs, he put an end to his existence. If he was in some degree blameable in the effect, he was not so in the principle. The contrary happens in the greater number of suicides : men kill themselves for bad reasons, in general, or they take a wrong time to do it. This is a lesson for the English, and of which they stand in great need : they ought to be put in mind, that there was formerly a law in the republic of Marseilles, which permitted the citizens to drink the juice of hemlock ; but not till after they had given sufficient reasons to the magistrates, and [39] received their approbation of them; by means of these precautions it may be easily imagined, that nothing was so rare in Marseilles as a suicide.

One last reflection, which the lives of the two Catos offer to me is, that their philosophical manner of thinking, had given them both an unpardonable indifference for their families. Odd circumstances of this kind, which I will not repeat, are related of them: I will only observe, that these proceeded from different motives. Cato the Censor, given up entirely to avarice, vanity, and a ridiculous attachment to the laws, considered every thing in a civil order, and nothing in a natural or domestic one. His grandson was very differently affected; the welfare of the Republic absorbed all his ideas:—however it may be, these two great men were inexcusable, in depriving themselves of the two greatest enjoyments of life, conjugal and paternal love.

The mistaken desire of imitating the virtues of Curius Denatus, authorised the conduct of Cato the Censor. The example of Cato of Utica, appeared, to his nephew Brutus, a sufficient authority to assassinate Caesar in full senate: he committed this crime, or rather this cruel and useless vengeance, with as pure intentions as those of his uncle. He was, like him, the enemy of tyranny, without being that of the tyrant: the basis of his action was justice, and a zeal to maintain the established laws of his country: but this principle was badly regulated and applied. Tyrants should be opposed in the beginning, and even punished, if it be possible; but there is but one method of treating confirmed

and inevitable tyranny, which is that of soothing it skilfully.

[40] ESSAY XV.

Character of Lucullus.

Those who know Roman history but imperfectly, do not render sufficient justice to Lucullus. We have heard speak of his magnificence and love of voluptuousness ; but we forget the services he did to his country, before he gave himself up to the amusements, which sweetened and embellished his retreat. He studied to advantage the Belles Lettres during his youth, became afterwards a statesman, a great general, and, towards the decline of his life, a philosopher. Being a friend to Sylla, he passed over too lightly the cruelties of this dictator, but he was not his accomplice in them. He was executor to his will, and tutor to his son, in preference to Pompey.—After having held all the public employments, capable of forming great men, as well at home as abroad, he became at last consul. After his consulship, the government of Cilicia becoming vacant, he had every right to demand it; it was a delicate business, and he would have had much difficulty in succeeding, had he not made Cethegus, tribune of the people, his friend. To obtain which, he found it necessary to apply to Precia the courtesan ; he feigned himself in love with her, knowing that this means, employed with address, was the most sure one of succeeding with women. He obtained what he wanted from the lover of his mistress, and little scrupulous about the means he made use of to arrive at his proposed end, he turned all to advantage.

He went into Asia, and by his wise conduct pacified the troops which had rebelled and mutinied, led them on to battle against Mithridates, [41] and greatly embarrassed this formidable enemy of the Romans. At the same time he acquired the friendship of the inhabitants of the conquered provinces ; stopped the depredations committed by the

farmers of the revenue, who were for the most part Roman knights, and forced them to ease the people, or at least to regulate with equity the receipt of taxes. This act of justice and moderation did him much honour. Having gloriously executed his first commission, he was some time after sent again towards Asia, and conducted himself with the same prudence and disinterestedness. He found that the true means of conquering Mithridates, was to cut off the provisions from his army, which was immense; this succeeded he besieged Amisus, which contained the chief riches of the king. He conquered this capital, and the Roman troops found in it a considerable booty. It did not depend upon the general that the army was not as orderly in taking possession of these treasures, as the profit arising from them was great, but he never could obtain this from his soldiers : they were already greatly relaxed in their ancient discipline : nevertheless he thought of pushing still farther his conquests. Mithridates had retired to the dominions of Tigranes, king of Armenia, his son-in-law ; it was there that Lucullus ought to have followed him.

Lucullus found means to disperse the immense armies of Tigranes and his father-in-law, although his own was infinitely inferior. By these means he gave the greatest proof of his knowledge in the art of war. He was enterprising enough to form the liege of Tigranocerta, capital of the kingdom of Armenia : its approaches were defended by an army of near three hundred thousand men : the Roman general dispersed them, and looked upon victory as certain the moment he had given a glance at their position. We have them, [42]said he : it was on one of those days which the Romans had marked in their calendar as unfortunate, because it had formerly been memorable by defeats : I will put it among the fortunate days, added he; and he did so accordingly. An hundred thousand barbarians fell in the battle which followed, wherein it is said, no more than five Romans were killed, and an hundred wounded.

The consequence of this victory was the taking of the capital. The conqueror marched towards Artaxata, the

ancient capital of Armenia : he would have taken it, for Mithridates and Tigranes slew before him, making but vain efforts to save it ; but the cold being severe, the Roman soldiers loaded with riches, declared openly they would not expose themselves to the rigours of a winter campaign, to gain a triumph less flattering to them than to their general. It was in vain that Lucullus set them the example of braving fatigue as well as danger, his soldiers did not follow him, and he was forced to leave his army inactive, and to renounce the honour of terminating a war so happily begun. During this time, intrigues were carried on at Rome against him, and his successor was named. When the season became favourable, Pompey took the command of the Roman army, easily conquered Tigranes, and forced Mithridates to suicide.

It was then that Lucullus strove to console himself, by leading the most easy and voluptuous life, for the mortifications he had met with in his political and military career. He felt that he had a right to repose, and that he could do nothing better than to make his retreat agreeable ; he had, moreover, experienced force domestic vexations. He had successively married two wives, whose conduct had given him much pain, and from whom he had been obliged to live separate, although the second was the sister of the austere Cato. [43] He saw that in Rome both sexes had violated the laws of virtue, honour and decency : it seems as if he had said to himself, " I will think of my personal pleasures only, since I can no longer hope to acquire glory : I will renounce the ambition of gaining the esteem of a people, who does not merit mine."

Is Lucullus, loaded with the spoils of Asia, had still been ambitious of acting a great part in Rome, he would have made himself a party there, and have greatly embarrassed Caesar and Pompey; he would at least have entered the triumvirate like Crassus, and have had more weight in it, because he had more merit; but he preferred the enjoyment of his riches. He built himself magnificent and delightful habitations both in town and country ; was profuse in the entertainments he gave to his friends, and to

those whom he thought worthy of being admitted into his society. He was noble and generous to others, but without suffering himself to be importuned: he assisted them with his purse, and credit, but did not strive to make himself partisans, and required no kind of acknowledgment. He saw with indifference Rome agitated by different factions, took no part therein, and was not persecuted by any of them. He had formed, as a man of talk, collections of books, and statues, and other curiosities, cultivated letters and the sciences : finally, he denied himself no kind of sensual pleasure, but declared that he was not a slave to his passions.----If Lucullus appeared to be an Egoist, and if he were actually so, because he had been a zealous citizen, a good officer, sufficiently ambitious, and even avaricious of glory. He had learnt, that, in certain countries, and in certain circumstances, when a man has paid to his country his contingency of zeal and services; it is fully permitted, and even wise, to think of nothing but himself.

[44] ESSAY XVI.

Characters of the two Gracchi.

The life of the two Gracchi cannot be read without concern, either in Plutarch, or in the history of the conspiracy of the Gracchi, by the Abbe de Saint Real. Young men are naturally pleased with the merit of these two young republicans ; they admire their audacity, and applaud their zeal for establishing in their country good order and equality. They soon think that if they were in their situations, they would act as they did, and that if the execution were dangerous, at least the enterprise would be glorious.

In maturer age, men judge of the Gracchi with more coolness and justice, and do not overrate their good qualities: for my part, I confess that I think I see in their conduct more ambition, impetuosity and rashness, than true patriotic zeal.--Grand children, by their mother, of the great Scipio, they signalised themselves at first in war.

Tiberius, the elder of the two, gained obsidional crowns, and did wonders in a battle which the consul, under whom he served in quality of questor, lost by his imprudence. The young questor was charged to make peace with the conquering enemy : he succeeded in this with much address, considering the disagreeable circumstances in which the Roman army was ; and if he did not save it, he secured his own reputation.

This beginning warmed the ambition of Tiberius ; he wished to fly to glory and riches, but found that the pretorial function would not afford him opportunities favourable enough ; he thought [45] that he should wait too long before he arrived at the consulship and the command of armies ; the office of tribune of the people, presented to him new and easy means of signalising himself, by supporting the lowest class of citizens, against the rich and powerful : he therefore solicited and obtained the tribuneship without difficulty, perceiving the great advantages which were attached to it. The tribunes had equally the power, for the public interest, of opposing new laws, and soliciting the execution of old ones. He attempted to renew the Agrarian law. This law commanded that no citizen should possess more lands than he could cultivate himself, and that he should be obliged to give the surplus to those of his fellow citizen, whose patrimony was less considerable than his own. It was excellent in its principles for a rising Republic ; but it became no longer of use when Rome had conquered so many kingdoms, and had carried her victorious arms into the middle of Asia, and especially to the coasts of Africa.

Yet the people, who consider less the difficulty of destroying certain abuses, than the advantages which would arise from a reform of them, approved of the proposition of Gracchus, who became immediately their idol. The rich and great represented to him in vain the embarrassments he was going to throw them into ; he rejected their representations and followed his purpose ; and upon being asked, if he meant to take from those who appeared to he too rich, the lands they possessed without

making them an equivalent, he declared that they were to be paid for them out of the public treasure, and, this treasure was founded upon their own wealth. Another tribune opposed the passing of this law ; but Gracchus carried things with so high a hand, that he had much difficulty in [46] saving his colleague from the hands of the multitude, who would have torn him to pieces. Gracchus was named Triumvir with his father-in-law and brother, in order to oblige all the rich citizens to give their lands to the poor ones. It may easily be conceived what disorder the execution of this plan would have occasioned, when, by good fortune, Attalus king of Pergamus died, and made the Roman people heirs to his kingdom and immense treasures.

Gracchus claimed immediately, in the name of the Roman people, this succession ; he pretended that the money ought to be distributed among the new possessors of lands, to enable them to cultivate them ; and that the kingdom of Pergamus ought to be governed in the name and for the advantage of the Romans, without the Senate's taking the least part therein. This last proposition, put the Senators out of all patience they saw it was absolutely necessary to get rid of Gracchus, without which, he would destroy the aristocracy, and by the aid of the people and the democracy, become matter of Rome. The destruction of Tiberius Gracchus, was therefore determined, and he was put to death in a very singular manner; the Senate in a body was his executioner. The Senators let out from the capitol, and crossing the city, went to the assembly of the people, followed by their clients armed, having themselves cuirasses, and swords under their robes. The people were at that time giving their suffrages for the continuation of Gracchus in the office of tribune, or rather they were to give them ; and although almost all the plebeians wished it, the noise was so great, it was impossible to hear or take the voices regularly. The Senators appeared; the people much astonished, opened a passage and let them approach [47] the tribunal where Gracchus was ; he would fain have made his escape ; but a man of the name of Satureius gave the signal by striking the first blow, and the tribune was soon overwhelmed by numbers. As soon as this was over,

the Senate arrested an hundred of the principal friends of Tiberius, and declared a greater number, who had retired and hid themselves, banished from Rome. The people overcome by fear, dared not to gather up the remains of their broken idol. The brother and family of Gracchus could not obtain permission to render him sepulchral honours, and his body was thrown into the Tiber.

Calla Gracchus, the younger brother of Tiberius, was at this time, engaged in the war against the Numidians, in the suite of his uncle Scipio.—Who would not have thought that the example of his elder brother would have served him as a lesson, and have prevented him from acting the odious and frequently useless part of reformer of the State : it happened the contrary. After the misfortune of his brother, he remained some time in secret, employed himself in adorning his mind, and learning eloquence, in which he succeeded so well, that on his return to Rome, and Tiberius being almost forgotten, he made a great figure at the bar; maintained with great ability some very interesting causes, which he gained with general applause. He was sent questor into Africa, where he rendered important services to his General ; for he not only managed the military chest with judgment and oeconomy, but the Roman troops in that country, being in want of many conveniences of life, which they could not procure of themselves, he prevailed upon Micipsa, king of Numidia, whom he had made his friend, to procure them every thing they could desire. He [48] returned to Rome after three years questorship ; and it was in vain that his enemies strove to cavil with him about his administration ; the general wish of the troops supported him. He then conceived the dangerous ambition of becoming tribune, as his brother had been. At the name of Gracchus the people called to mind Tiberius, and in spite of all the opposition and intrigues of the Senate, Caius Gracchus was elected.

He contented himself for some time with haranguing gracefully and with elegance ; he delighted the Romans, and alarmed the great, who were not deceived in thinking that he would soon make a storm break over their heads.

The Senate having decided two important causes contrary to his advice, he complained of it loudly, and formed a company of three hundred Roman knights, which company was called the Counter Senate ; because it took upon itself to criticise and reform, under the authority of the people, the judgments given by the three hundred Senators ; and to protect those people, who appeared to be unjustly oppressed. This establishment made the Senate tremble, and not without reason, as it gained Caius the greatest popularity, which urged him to form several other excellent establishments, such as public granaries, bridges and streets, till he became the idol of the people : the Senate considered the best way to check his designs, was to oppose to him another tribune, who appeared to be still more zealous than himself ; his name was Drusus: but Gracchus unmasked him, and in order to surpass him entirely, brought forward the project of the Agrarian law, which had been so fatal to his brother. Scipio, the second Africanus, although cousin to Gracchus, was at that time his most cruel adversary : he enjoyed all the consideration and [49] esteem which the honour of putting a final period to the Punic war, and to the existence of Carthage, could give to a Roman citizen. Gracchus, without being alarmed at this great renown, made head against him, with as much ability as audacity, aided by Fulvius Flaccus, whom the protection of Gracchus had raised to the consulship.

Whilst these things were passing, Scipio was found dead in his bed ; this sudden death caused suspicions to fall upon Gracchus and his friends, and perhaps the tribune did not take pains enough to destroy them ; thinking that he had no more rivals so formidable as Scipio had been, his audacity increased ; and the senate found that this second tyrant, was not less dangerous than his brother, and that it was full as necessary to cut off the head of the second hydra, as it had been that of the first. In a great assembly of the Roman people, Caius Gracchus made a proposition to destroy the elevated benches for the consular personages and principal senators ; the Senate set immediately a price upon his head, and the people defended him no more than they had done Tiberius. Gracchus made propositions of peace ; he was attended to

for the sole purpose of gaining time enough to judge how far he would be supported. As soon as it was known that he would be entirely forsaken by his friends, he was pursued ; and the last of the Gracchi, being without resource, resolved upon putting himself to death. The Roman people mourned the loss of their hero, without striving to avenge his fate. Two statues were erected to the memory of the brothers;—even temples were consecrated to them, and the senate suffered, with a malicious smile, these vain honours to be paid to their memories. The people are frequently ungrateful to those who endeavour to liberate [50] them from slavery, as they generally suspect that their pretended deliverers act as much from motives of private interest, as for that of the public ; — they are often right: even the Gracchi were not free from this suspicion : however, another of less consequence, maybe formed against them, which is that of rashness, imprudence and inconsiderateness. It seems to me, that they abused their good sense, zeal and abilities.: supposing even that they were sincere, they were severely punished for it. Yet these examples have not prevented them from having about seventeen hundred years after their deaths, some imitators : such were in the sixteenth century, the Count Jean-Louis de Fiesque, a Genoese, and in the seventeenth, Cardinal de Retz.

ESSAY XVII.

Character of Count De Fiesque, and Cardinal De Retz.

Jean Louis de Fiesque , Count de Lavagne, of one of the most illustrious houses of Genoa, was respected on account of his birth, riches, the graces of his person, and the agreeableness of his wit ; and being no more than twenty-two years of age, was imprudent enough to strive to imitate the Gracchi, and finished his career as unhappily as they had done. The history of the revolution which he attempted to bring on at Genoa, and to which he fell a victim, was written in Italian, in 1629, by Augustin Mascardi, [51] in the manner of that of Catiline, by

Sallust.—Mascardi introduced into his history, in imitation of Sallust, harangues or discourses, which were supposed to be delivered by the conspirators, deliberating with their chief, upon the success of the conspiracy they had formed. The Cardinal de Retz, whilst he was yet very young, found this history in Italian so interesting, that he translated and embellished it ; and applied himself with an assiduity, which proves he was highly pleased with the character of the hero, and that he would gladly have taken him for a model the Cardinal seems to acknowledge this, by some passages in his Memoirs. Yet what could he find to flatter himself with in this resemblance ? and to what end did he think to arrive, by pretending to imitate the Count de Fiesque ? This would be difficult to discover, is it were not known that there is no reasoning with the passions, and that brilliant actions are, for the most part, rather the effect of a violence of character, than the consequence of any project formed with reflection.

The conspiracy of Fiesque was briefly as follows : Andre Doria after having been a long time attached to the service of Francis the First, became dissatisfied with this monarch, his ministers and favourites; and abandoned the French party, as much perhaps to vex the Court which he had betrayed, as from a true patriotic zeal. He had restored to the City of Genoa its ancient liberty ; and established there an aristocratical government, of which he was the real chief.

Andre Doria, old and respectable by his victories, was not personally exposed to the jealousy of his fellow citizens; but he had a nephew whom he looked upon as his adopted son, called Jannetin Doria, who was young, lively and haughty : it [52] was on him fell the hatred of those who thought that in a Republic there ought to be a kind of equality among all the Members of the aristocratic party. The Count de Fiesque held out this principle when talking to his friends ; he excited them to revolt ; though in public he shewed the highest; esteem for Jannetin Doria, whose sister had lately been married to the brother-in-law of the Count de Fiesque.

At a moment when it was least expected, Fiesque convoked an assembly of friends, at his own house, and discovered to them a plan of revolt, in which there was more audacity than wisdom. He had sound means to purchase four row-boats, which were in the port of Genoa, and which he had armed, as he pretended, for a cruise against the Mahometan pirates. He had gained over some soldiers of the garrison, and going out at midnight with the conspirators, he attempted to surprize the palace of the Republic ; but he did not succeed : from whence wishing to gain the port, and to go on board one of his row-boats ; he had no sooner set his foot upon a plank than it turned under him he fell into the mud, and the weight of his arms hearing him down he was suffocated. His partisans knew nothing of his death for some hours afterwards, and the revolt continued the remainder of the night: the gates of the city were shut, and Jannetin Doria was massacred in attempting to defend them.

Old Doria was gone from Genoa, and the Senate was ready to capitulate with Fiesque, when it was perceived that this chief of the revolt did not exist. His name, which during a whole night, and part of the following day, had served as a word of rallying to the partisans of liberty or of a new slavery, was proscribed the day following.[53] Old Andre Doria returned to put the last seal to the condemnation of his enemy. He made one of his relations, Jerome de Fiesque, suffer the greatest torments, and banned the others, to the fifth generation, from the States of the Republic. The chief branch came to establish itself in France, and to form there a considerable house: the last of the Fiesques died unmarried in 1708. There were in the thirteenth century two Popes of that family, and afterwards a great number of Cardinals. The younger branches returned to Genoa, where they existed not long ago.

Jean Francois Paul de Goudi, wrote, at seventeen years of age, the history of the Count de Fiesque; but he did not so

soon find means to shew his talent, or rather his turn for intrigue; for it was not before he was twenty-eight years of age, that he was named Coadjutor of the Archbishopric of Paris, possessed by Jean Francois de Goudi, his uncle. Lewis XIV. ascended the throne the same year, and the troubles of the Fronde did not begin till five years afterwards, in 1648. The Coadjutor signalized himself till the year 1652, when he was arrested, and put into prison; first at Vincennes, afterwards in the Citadel of Nantes, whence he made his escape in 1655. He wandered for sometime in different parts of Europe, and, having made his peace with the Court, in 1661, he resigned the Archbishopric of Paris, and kept nothing but the Abbey of Saint Denis ; he lived afterwards in a very becoming manner, having recovered from those errors into which the examples of the Gracchi, of Catiline and the Count de Fiesque had thrown him. Yet he was pleased in his old age, with the remembrance of the stir he had made in his youth. Having a good memory, he related with satisfaction the [54] particulars of his turbulent and agitated life ; he has even written them, and his work is well known under the name of Memoirs of the Cardinal de Retz. I may say it is a family work, because my near relations have preserved the manuscript, from which it was printed in the year 1717. I dare moreover assure the reader, that is this manuscript had been lost, I should have found it in good preservation in the conversation of my uncle, M. de Caumartin, bishop of Blois; this prelate, from whose conversation I learned the stile of the wits in the time of Louis XIV. had been brought up, if I may be allowed the expression, in the lap of the Cardinal de Retz, who had permission given him, a short time before his death, to resign in his favour the Abbey of Buzay, which the Cardinal himself had been invested with when he was very young. My uncle kept it till his death. My maternal grandfather, (father of the bishop) was the intimate friend of the Cardinal ; my grandmother, who lived to a great age, had known him particularly ; therefore I have on all sides excellent traditions about this famous personage, and I can take upon me to say, that he was really a turbulent man ; a man of intrigue, without motive or objet, making a noise for the sake of doing so; and that he was very awkward in the choice of his means, although he had in

other respects force excellent qualities. Such men are disagreeable to meet with, and dangerous to follow, when they meddle with public affairs; but when they are quite retired from them, they are sometimes delightful in conversation.

I mean to give some touches of the character of the Cardinal de Retz, and of his adventures, more from my own private knowledge and reflections, than from what is already published.

[55]The Cardinal de Retz had for his preceptor M. Vincent, who has since been beatified, and will, without doubt, soon be canonised, under the name of Saint Vincent of Paule.— If it were true, that those who are charged with the education of young people, have an influence upon their character and conduct in the world, the Cardinal de Retz ought to have been the most mild, charitable and pious of all prelates; but, either he did not profit by the lessons of his blessed preceptor, or did not hearken to him. His father and mother, on the contrary, loved M. Vincent to adoration ; and it is perhaps for this reason that their son thought little about him. It happens but too frequently; that children take a pride in acting contrary to what they have seen practised by their fathers and mothers.

Madam de Goudi had a part in all the charitable establishments which must immortalize M. Vincent: the Foundling Hospital, the Grey Sisters, and the Missionaries of Saint Lazarus. How happy would she have been to have become the mother of a respectable and an edifying prelate; but her son did not afford her this satisfaction, although he was promoted to the first dignities of the church.

Her husband, father of the Cardinal de Retz, after having been General of the Gallies, became a widower, entered the congregation of Oratorians, and was admitted a father of that order. He was buried in the church of the seminary

Saint Magloire, in 1662. The son ought to have begun where the father ended ; but he took quite another route:—although he was, at thirteen years of age, a Canon of Notre-Dame, and incumbent of two abbeys, he shewed, on leaving college, inclinations quite [56] opposite to those which the profession he was destined to required; and it may be said, that he did every thing in his power to lose the Archbishopric of Paris, which was to him almost a sure heritage, having been held by his grand and two proximate uncles. Before he arrived at the age of seventeen years he had fought three duels, and been concerned in two affairs of gallantry which had made some noise.—Nevertheless his family was determined to make him the coadjutor of his uncle, and he was obliged, notwithstanding his conduct and inclinations, to remain in the church, and make, whether he would or not, a great fortune therein.

The young Abby de Retz intrigued at Court, —and against whom? Against the Cardinal de Richelieu :—and for why? This is what he would have had much difficulty in explaining, for it could be no sort of use to him. It was at this time that he translated the history of the conspiracy of Fiesque; he shewed his work to the Abbe de Boisrobert, and accompanied it undoubtedly with some reflections, which gave this great wit, devoted to the Cardinal de Richelieu, to understand, that the Abbe de Retz was well enough disposed to become factious and a conspirator. Boisrobert told this to the first Minister, who said publicly, that he saw plain enough the little Abbe would some day become a dangerous being. This alarmed M. de Goudi, his father ; but the son was on the contrary delighted with it : he found himself highly flattered, by being treated at his age, as a man dangerous to the first Minister, who made France and all Europe tremble. To support this fine character, which he pretended already to act, he disputed the first of Licentiate [57] in the Sorbonne; with the Abbe de la Mothe Houdancourt, (related to the Cardinal and protected by him,) and obtained it. Richelieu, Proviseur and Restaurateur of the Sobonne, was equally astonished and amazed ; he threatened the donors who had voted against his relation ; they all went trembling to the Abbe de Retz to inform him of it, who answered them

generously, though haughtily, that rather than be the cause of disputes between the gentlemen of the Sorbonne and their protector, he would resign the place, and be contented with having merited it.

So haughty a conduct alarmed the family of Goudi. The Abbe was sent into Italy: he distinguished himself at Venice by his gallantries, at Rome by his uncouth behaviour, and soon returned to Paris, to support again the dangerous and useless part of enemy and rival- of the Cardinal de Richelieu. Sometimes he attached himself to women who were displeasing to the Cardinal, at other times, he paid his addresses to his mistresses, and even took them from him :at length he entered into a conspiracy, which had nothing less in view than the assassination of Richelieu. It appears that this project did not at all frighten the young Abbe, he thought himself a little Fiesque: he was about the same age, twenty-two years old, which was the age of his model when he was killed; but fortunately the conspiracies of the French Abbe did not break out so suddenly as those of the Genoese Count; he had the happiness of seeing all his projects miscarry one after the other, without any accident or danger to his person. After this, he was given to understand, that he could do nothing more unprofitable than to unite himself to turbulent men, with whom he could gain [58] nothing, but might, on the contrary, ruin his fortune. He found that it was necessary to change his manner of proceeding; he associated with devotees, without becoming one himself; and with ecclesiastics who were reputed holy, before he led an exemplary life : he undertook to bring about extraordinary conversions, before he was himself converted ; and he found the most: esteemed clergy, and those who held the first rank in the church, very favourably disposed to receive him as a prodigal son, without waiting till he returned from his errors.

The good M. Vincent himself took pleasure in believing, that the instructions which he had formerly given him, were not seeds sown on bad ground ; the devotees thought it an honour to reckon him of their number, and without

putting him to severe proofs, they took him to the coadjutor of the Archbishopric of Paris. It was necessary to begin by reconciling him to the Cardinal ; this was brought about : it was mentioned in his favour, and as an all of conversion on his part, that he did not enter into the conspiracy of Cinq-Mars. Nothing more was necessary to prove that he had renounced all intrigue ; but it appeared by what followed that he was not yet cured of it.

Every disposition was made to procure him the Coadjutorship of Paris, when the Cardinal de Richelieu died. Lewis XIII. died soon after : had he lived, he would probably have finished the affair. This honour was reserved for the Queen, Anne of Austria, who began her regency by giving her confidence to people of the greatest incapacity : they made her commit another fault, by prevailing [59] upon her to insure the Archbishopric of Paris to a person as turbulent and dangerous as the future Cardinal de Ritz.

Mazarine, who soon found means to displace these first favourites of the Regent, would not perhaps have been guilty of this fault; but after all, the Cardinal de Retz made him more afraid than he did him harm : the policy of these two personages was of a very different nature ; they had, perhaps, both of them bad hearts : they were neither of them respectable on account of their virtue and honour; but Mazarine had his views and pursued them, his head never failed him ; is he was not very brave, he was neither rash nor inconsiderate : if he was not a great man, he was an able and dexterous one. The Cardinal de Retz was neither ; for a man is not great, when he has not great views; and of what use are talents and address, when a man has no determined object to pursue.

The Abbe de Retz, being Coadjutor of Paris, retired to Saint Lazarus, near his old master, M. Vincent. It may be conceived that the good old man gave him the best advice he was capable of : he feigned to profit by it, but this was on his part mere policy. He acknowledged in his Memoirs,

that he employed the hours destined to meditation, in reflecting, not upon the manner of living like a good Bishop, but upon that of taking advantage of his character and place, and of doing evil methodically. I have known many turbulent men like him, who, when they had time, on their hands, formed plans of conduct detestable in their object, but excellently combined, and very likely to succeed, is they had been followed. The Coadjutor appeared for some time to act agreeable to his plan : he preached in Paris, and put into his sermons, (as my uncle assures me,) both sense and erudition, according to the tale of the age, and [60] even an appearance of piety, which he learned without doubt from the good M. Vincent. The people of Paris were delighted to see their Archbishop in the pulpit : he affected to perform other religious duties, in discharging the episcopal functions of his uncle in his absence.

Having thus prepared the way, the Coadjutor waited only for an opportunity to break out, and to reap some advantage from the prudence he had observed in his conduct, and which he was incapable of continuing for a long time ; but great opportunities did not offer for the space of four or five years : And in the mean time he had some disputes about his rank, in quality, of Diocesan of Paris : he maintained them with audacity, and proved to the Cardinal Mazarine that he was not a contemptible enemy. On the other hand, it would have cost too much to have gained him over, for it appeared that his pretensions were nothing less than to fill the place of the Cardinal.

In the mean time, the great indiscretions committed by the Queen, enflamed the minds of the Parisians : it was then that the Coadjutor played his great game : he gained the people secretly, by charities to the poor, without explaining what he wanted with them. Sometimes, he went to the Queen, to inform her Majesty of the bad disposition of the people ; at other times he told the Parliament of those of the Queen and her Minister. The Coadjutor manoeuvred in this manner till the famous day of the barricades, when he shook off all disguise. There is nothing more curious

than the details contained in his Memoirs, upon the commencement of the war of Paris, and its consequences. The weakness of the Queen and of those who were about her ; the artful, but illiberal manner [61] of treating the Cardinal ; the ridicule and folly of several Members of Parliament, and the inconsiderate turbulence of the people of Paris, are therein described in the most lively and true colours.

The Coadjutor used but little dissimulation, in the mischievous and foolish part he acted in that affair, which continued during the years 1648 and 1649. after a trifling interruption, it began again in 1650, and lasted till the year 1651 ; and he there appeared in it more turbulent, rash and inconsiderate than ever. The description of the strange scene which passed in the great hall of the palace, where he was to assassinate the prince, or he assassinated by him, would appear to us apocryphal, is it had not been public, and transmitted to posterity by people of all ranks, who were witnesses of what passed ; but it will always appear inconceivable that the principal actor should relate it with a frankness and naivete, of which we have no example.

The Coadjutor obtained, in 1652, the Hat, which constituted the whole glory of his life ; but he would have obtained it much sooner if his conduct had been different from what it was. He is not the only man in the world who has taken every imaginable pains to destroy a fortune which appeared certain, and to render problematical the bell sounded hopes. If he did not lose the Hat, which could not well escape him, every step he took from the moment he had it, tended to make him lose the esteem and consideration of the public; and to deprive him of that repose which he did not enjoy again till ten years afterwards, in the most silent retreat, and profound inaction.

I observed at the beginning of this article, that Messieurs Caumartins, my relations, had some [62] part in the publication of the Memoirs of the Cardinal de Retz ; it

confined in their entrusting to some indiscreet persons, a copy of these Memoirs, which had been found in the Convent of Commercy, in Lorraine, where the Cardinal had passed some years, and of which he was Seigneur; not that it depended upon any of his benefices, but because it was a part of the inheritance of his mother, Marguerite de Silly de la Rochepot.—The `good women who were in possession of these Memoirs, did not know either the merits or demerits of them ; I believe they were even ignorant of the lady to whom they were addressed : I know no more of her than they did ; but it is certain that it was in the beginning of the Regency of the Duke of Orleans, in 1717, that the first furtive edition of these Memoirs appeared: The Regent asked my father, who was still Lieutenant of the Police, what effect he thought the book might produce : " Non: that ought to make, your Grace uneasy," answered M. d Argenson ; " the manner in which the Cardinal de Retz speaks " of himself,—the frank discovery of his character,—avowal of his faults, and the information he gives of the ill success of which his imprudence was the cause, will encourage no one to imitate him : on the contrary, his misfortunes are a lesson to the rash and turbulent. It cannot be conceived why this man has left his confession in writing ? if it has been printed with the hope of procuring him the absolution of the public, this will certainly be refused him."—My father might be right in his judgment, of the effect which these Memoirs ought to have produced, yet they had quite a contrary one.

The appearance of sincerity which runs through this work, seduced and delighted mens minds.— [63] Although the stile be neither pure nor brilliant, it was read with pleasure and avidity ; and what is still more, there were people who were so enraptured with the character of the Cardinal de Retz, that they thought seriously of imitating him ; and as the Cardinal had not been disgusted with the characters, of the Gracchi, of Catiline, and the Count de Fiesque, nor with the unhappy fate which befell them; so his disgraces did not discourage those who were inclined to take him for a model, although they had not perhaps his spirit of intrigue. Government perceived this in the year 1718, and

the Regent spoke of it again to my father, who was become Keeper of the Seals; a new remedy was sought for the bad effects which the Memoirs had produced. It was proposed to print the Memoirs of Joly, who had been his Secretary; they were also in the library of M. de Caumartin, who made some difficulty in giving them up: the Cardinal is treated more severely in them than in his own ; but the Regent was determined to ruin entirely, the reputation of the Cardinal de Retz, to make known his real character, and to disgust those who were disposed to imitate him. The Memoirs of Joly, did not produce this effect ; being written in a manner less pleasing than those of the Cardinal, they brought an odium upon the author : he was looked upon as an ungrateful and faithless servant, who injured the reputation of him who had for a considerable time given him bread: the frankness of the Cardinal had, on the contrary, interested people in his behalf; and notwithstanding every thing that was done, men of turbulent dispositions continued to love him, and to imitate his conduct at the risque of every thing that could befall them; and no person ever declared himself in favour of M. Joly.

[64] ESSAY XVIII.

Henry of Lorraine's Character, and Attempt on the Sovereignty of Naples.

Much about the time when the Cardinal de Retz was uselessly employed in intrigues, a considerable personage of the family of Lorraine, undertook to support the revolt of a country to which his ancestors had really had some pretensions : but titles are not sufficient to pretend to great possessions ; force, abilities, and fortunate events, are necessary to recover and preserve them.

Henry of Lorraine, Duke of Guise, grandson to Henry the First, who was assassinated at Blois, in 1588, full of

vivacity, enterprising but unready, being at Rome in 1649, heard of the Neapolitan revolt, and thought himself destined to take advantage of it ; he remembered the part his ancestors had acted in France, under the reigns of Francis I. Henry II. and those of the children of the last . He imagined it would be still more easy for him to succeed in a lesser theatre : with this idea he resolved to put himself at the head of the Neapolitans, and easily obtained the honour of being their commander. Until he could give them succours of men and money, he could not hope for the support of any power, except that of France, and it was rather on account of the hatred she bore the Spaniards, and a wish to encrease their difficulties, than with the idea of making him a powerful sovereign, that she would protect him.—Government was not sorry to keep at a distance the man [65] who bore the great name of Guise, which sixty years before had shook the crown upon the head of the weak Henry III. but it was thought advisable not to buy this absence too dear.

The Duke of Guise was endowed with all the gifts of nature ; tall and erect, his features regular, his physiognomy happy and graceful ; there was a nobleness in his countenance, manner and conversation, which captivated the heart; his mind was adorned, is not by means of serious studies, at least by a great deal of reading ; he spoke several languages in their greater purity, especially the French and Italian : he was brave even to intrepidity and temerity,—knew enough of the art of war, although he had not been commander in chief,—and of politics, although he had never been charged with any important or difficult negotiation. He seemed born to have what was said of his grandfather and great grandfather , applied to him: “That in a numerous court where the princes of Guise appeared, the rest of the nobility seemed in comparison to be nothing more than common people.” But otherwise he had defects, which are but too common to those of his birth and rank : he thought himself so destined to great affairs, that he undertook them inconsiderately, and supported them with more haughtiness than care and attention: he perceived when it was too late, the faults he had committed, but he would never avow them, and drove

rather to hide or defend, than repair them. Until he was thirty-two years of age, the time he went to Naples, love had been the misfortune of his life. His father, who had retired into Tuscany to avoid the persecutions of the Cardinal de Richelieu, (who [66] took care not to suffer in France, a man, whom it had been proposed in the States General of the League, to make a King) had made him renounce the Archbishopric of Rheims, to marry in 1638, a princess of Gonzague ; from whom he separated two years afterwards, to marry at Brussels the Countess of Bossut, widow of a Seigneur of the house of Hennin.

On his return to France in 1643, after the death of Lewis XIII. he became violently in love with Mademoiselle de Pons, who, joined to the advantages of the most illustrious birth, had every charm which can render a female agreeable.— Knowing that he could not tempt her otherwise than by the offer of his hand and brilliant fortune, he undertook to make at Rome his second marriage void, as he had done the first ; but he found in this some very great difficulties : he brought his cause before the Rota, the first tribunal of the capital of the Christian World, at the time the revolt at Naples began, in 1646, under the government, or rather the tyranny of the Duke of Arcos. This Vice-Roy had imposed burthensome taxes upon the articles of consumption ; the populace undertook to get the imposts taken off, and had at first for its leader a man of the lowest extraction, his name Thomas Aniello. As vile a chief as he was, he soon became too considerable to be despised : after speaking in a haughty tone without being attended to, he forced the palace of the Vice-Roy, pillaged it, seized him by the mustache, and the Duke of Arcos thought himself happy in retiring to the Castle of Saint Elme.— It was then necessary that Spanish haughtiness should have recourse to all the artifices of Italian policy. The Vice-Roy employed the Archbishop and some Seigneurs of the country whose names [67] were dear to the Neapolitans ; but the people perceived that some of these betrayed them, and that others acted with duplicity. They persisted in their revolt, which became more and more dangerous, on account of their being more animated and mistrustful. They declared Mas or Thomas Aniello

their chief, and this man was for fifteen days in the month of July 1647., absolute master in Naples: nothing could be more ridiculous than this kind of royalty ; the exterior appearance of the monarch, and that of the court, exhibited the most ridiculous farce; but those who saw it played too near, must have trembled, of whatever description or party they, might be, is they had any thing to lose. The Vice-Roy was wholly intent upon destroying Mas Aniello : he endeavoured to get him assassinated, in which he could not at first succeed it is thought that he contrived to give him a potion which had an effect upon his brain; perhaps the greatness of the enterprize and the uncertainty of success had this effect. However this may be, Mas Aniello, after committing great follies, was massacred by his own servants : the people were delighted with it the first day, treated his body with indignity, and soon after regretted his loss.

The Vice-Roy seeing the rebels without a commander, thought he could undertake any thing ; he was guilty of new indiscretions, and the people perceived themselves in want of another chief : they appointed one whom they took from a quite different class, this was the Prince of Massa, of the: house of Toralte. He had signalised himself in war; but the Court of Madrid being jealous of his reputation and abilities, had obliged him to live in his own country as a simple individual : he was [68] now old and much afflicted with the gout. As it was known that he was greatly displeased with the Spaniards, the people called out loudly for him to become their general,--he accepted this delicate commission; but he soon perceived that he could not well command those who did not know how to obey. He obtained twice for the people conditions reasonable enough ; in order that he might have nothing more to do than to take such measures as were necessary to oblige the Vice-Roy to fulfil them : but the people neglected the means of making themselves respected. The Prince of Masia stood his ground for three months, notwithstanding all the disagreeable circumstances attached to his situation; he wished that the people and the nobility should be united against the Spaniards their common enemies; but on the contrary, these two classes equally discontented, suspected

each other : finally, he thought that the best thing he could do would be to disengage himself from a burthen which lay heavy upon him, and to place it upon the shoulders of a stranger who had neither relations nor friends in the city; and who could not be suspected by the populace which had mutinied.

Things were in this situation when it was learnt that the Duke of Guise, who was at Rome, had views upon Naples. He appeared to be the most fit man to command a revolt, not as a sovereign, but as the protector of a rising republic. The Duke accepted the command upon this footing, and took for his model the Count of Nassau, who, in defending the rising republic of the United Provinces, brought things to such a pass as to establish and maintain it.

Whilst he was taking these measures, and writing to France to obtain succours from Anne of [69] Austria and the Cardinal Mazarine, the new republicans drew up a manifest, begging the support of foreign powers ; but in a little time after, they massacred the Prince of Massa upon the most: false and unjust accusations. After a short anarchy, the people elected for chief Gennare (or Janvier) Aunese, a man of low birth, and without any other merit than that of bravery, and a great hatred against the Spaniards ; besides he was ugly to a ridiculous degree, brutal, irreligious, and had none of those mental qualities which make men amiable. Aunese having audaciously possessed himself of authority, preserved it in spite of all murmurs and discontent, when the Duke of Guise having received answers from France, dictated by the Cardinal Mazarine, and in which the Duke was amused with hopes, in order that he might amuse the rebels, he resolved to set off for Naples, where he arrived like a true hero of knight errantry. He embarked without much suite, in a felucca, passed undiscovered in the day time, through the Spanish fleet which blocked up the port of Naples. But as soon as he appeared in the city, his noble air and manners left the Neapolitans no room to doubt, that he was the heir of those princes the house of Anjou, who had reigned for so long a time over the two Sicilies: he declared, that he returned to

the inheritance of his fore-father, not to govern as a tyrant, but to protect his people, who were become republicans. He announced to them that a French fleet was to sail from Toulon, to succour Naples, and he was declared Generalissimo, even over Aunese, though he acted conjointly with him. These two persons of so different a turn and character acted, for six weeks or two months, seemingly in concert ; hut it plainly appeared, that Aunese was the man of [70] the people, and that the Duke was more fit for the illustrious and great. All his manners were noble ; he was gallant with the women, and generous to the gentlemen of the country : this alone, would perhaps have ruined him.

At length the French Fleet arrived, and appeared ready to engage that of Spain. This circumstance encreased the credit of the Duke of Guise; they offered him the title of King, which he refuted ; but he consented to be proclaimed Generalissimo and Duke of Naples, with a sovereign power, which at first was to continue for seven years, but was soon afterwards declared perpetual. Aunese appeared to comply, and seemed to be no more than a private subject, or an officer of the new sovereign. The Generalissimo ordered money to be coined, upon which were put his name and arms. The most brilliant time of the Duke of Guise at Naples, was the last month of the year 1647, and the two first of 1648 ; but the French fleet soon retired, without having come to an engagement with the Spaniards, or having done the Neapolitans the least essential service : the French left some of their officers in Naples, and things were in this situation when the fleet disappeared. The confidence of the Neapolitans was soon diminished ; in vain did the Duke of Guise and the French, who were attached to him, perform prodigies of valour: Aunese strove secretly to destroy their reputation, in which he succeeded. The Prince and the ancient chief of the people soon sought each other's life, perceiving that the ruin of one was necessary to the safety of the other. The Spaniards made offers to the Duke of Guise ; but he knew they were only feigned, and made to render him suspected. They gained secretly the perfidious Aunese; this traitor gave them [71] possession of the Tourion of the Carmes, a

kind of fortress, of which he was master; and whilst the Duke of Guise was employed in attacking distant posts, Naples returned to the dominion of Spain: this was in the month of 1648.

Guise supported to the last his courage, firmness and generosity: he made useless efforts to get into Naples, and was at length taken prisoner, after having defended himself like a lion. The Spaniards triumphed at his capture, and whilst they paid him the honours due to a prisoner of the first rank, they deliberated in council, whether or not they should take away his life. A Machiavelian politician voted for this odious resolution: but Don Juan of Austria, and the first Spanish nobility had generosity enough to think differently : the Duke was sent into Spain, where he remained four years a prisoner. At the end of this period, the Spaniards who strove to foment the troubles of the Fronde, with which France was agitated, thought that the Duke of Guise was an instrument proper to augment the disturbances in the kingdom; and that he would as against France with as much audaciousness and activity as he had done to support the revolt of Naples. They were deceived in their opinion ; Guise was incapable of contributing to the evils of his real country, however discontented he might be with Mazarine, who had scandalously deceived him; he would not revenge himself by betraying the young King, who at ten years old could not be suspected of having had any part in the wrongs his minister had done.

During the imprisonment of the Duke of Guise in Spain, Mazarine made an attempt which proved more fruitless than that of Guise; he had lent out a fleet, in which the Prince Thomas of Savoy, whose son had married the niece of the first Minister,[72] had failed. The wishes of this Prince were to reign over Naples, and Mazarine was more warm in his efforts to aid him, than he had been to succour the Duke of Guise. But the man he protected had not the merit of him whom he had abandoned, and things were not in so favourable a situation : this second enterprize failed.

Guise being returned to France, proposals were made him to attempt a third expedition. Government armed at Toulon in 1654, another fleet destined to bring about a new revolution in Naples. Guise did not hesitate to embark; but he was as badly seconded in this last expedition as he had been in the first ; and it was equally unsuccessful, although the Duke took the city and the castle of Castellamere, of which he kept possession for some time. Discouraged by so many misfortunes, and disgusted with every kind of ambition, Henry of Lorraine was promoted; in 1655, to the place of great Chamberlain of France ; and he confined himself for the remainder of his life to the peaceful functions of this great office of the crown. He performed the duties of his office at the king's marriage, and at the entry of the Queen Maire Therese into Paris, with all the dignity, magnificence, and gracefulness of a descendent of the dukes of Guise, in the preceding century; he, commanded, or rather conducted, one of the tournaments in the famous carousal of 1663 ; and appeared, worthy to be upon a footing with the great Conde, who immediately preceded him.**[In this magnificent Carousal, the Duke of Guise commanded the tournament of American savages ; his troop was the most singular of all, and as brilliant as any of the others. The Duke, under the title of King of America, had painted upon his escutcheon a Lion couchant, and at the top an Eagle, with these words for device, *Altiora praeumo*. " I undertake the greater things."] He must at this moment have recollected all the greatness he [73] enjoyed during some months at Naples; but he had bid adieu to all serious affairs, as well in love as in ambition; he thought no more of Mademoiselle de Pons ; yet he would never be reconciled to his legitimate wife, formerly the Countess of Bossut. This lady survived him ; she lived till the year 1670. The duke died in 1664, at sixty years of age, without posterity.

We have the Memoirs of the Duke of Guise during the revolt of Naples, written by different hands, and with opposite intentions. The two works appeared in a short

time after the death of the hero. The author of the first was the Count Raymond of Modena and Avignon, who, being attached to the duke, went with him to Naples, where he became Major General of his troops, and defended the city of Aversa, between Naples and Capua, against the Spaniards. It appears that M. de Guise had a great friendship for this officer, but that towards the end of time he stayed at Naples, he had reason to, complain of him. Modena apparently to justify himself, animadverted freely upon some of the faults of his general, and discovered certain defects which the duke might have in his character. The work of the Count of Modena appeared in 1667, under the title of *Histoire der Revolutions de la Ville. de Naples* (en 1647). The following year, Saint Yon, an old secretary of the duke's, published another in opposition, under the title of *Memoires de M. le Duc de Guise*. This work is written in the name of the prince himself, whether the manuscript may have been found among his papers, or that the Saint Yon may have given it this turn, in order, to make the memoirs more interesting. He acquits the, duke of all the. indiscretions which are: imputed to him in the preceding work, and represents [74] him in the most favourable light, yet in such a manner, that it appears as if the prince himself spoke, and was modest enough in giving his own eulogium. This makes these memoirs interesting, and marks them with the characters of truth. The memoirs written by Modena, are not so much so; yet who knows is it be not the latter which contain the real truth ? Who can say, which of two ocular witnesses, that have been equally in a situation to know what passed, and yet have given contrary testimonies, is to be preferred ? Their contradictions can only be founded upon prejudices; but who can discover the effects of them, especially after such a length of time.

ESSAY XIX.

Cardinal Amboise's Ministerial Conduct.

On reading the life of the Cardinal Amboise, I found great room for reflection upon the glory and reputation of kings and their ministers. There are reigns which owe every thing to ministers, such as that of Lewis XIII. under the administration of Richelieu ; and there are others wherein kings and ministers have concurred so well together, as to make the people equally obliged to them; such were the reigns of Henry IV. and Lewis XIV. It may be said, that Sully would have done nothing so well had he had any [75] other master than Henry IV. and that Henry would not have been so great a monarch without Sully. Thus Colbert would never have had such extended views, nor have executed the great things he did, Lewis XIV. had not inspired and supported him. It appears to be proved by the reign of Lewis XIV that sometimes a good king alone acts well, and that a minister is no more than the executor of his wise decrees. Yet the minister partakes of the glory, merit, and wisdom of his matter; especially when the latter is prudent enough not to be jealous of the reputation of his minister.

The Cardinal Amboise had, in my opinion, no other virtues than those of his master ; and Lewis XII. possessed such as acquired him the flattering title of Father of his People. George d'Amboise had wit, abilities and address ; he used them principally to make his fortune, and it was not his fault that he did not make it still more considerable than it really was; but I am of opinion, that all the merit of the reign of Lewis XII. is due to the monarch, and the blame to the first minister. Lewis XII. was a mild and good man, but fearing to act according to his own manner of thinking, he asked advice of others; and I suspect the Cardinal Amboise of being more artful and political in his counsels, than candid and zealous for the real interests of his prince and country. In order to be well convinced of this, it is necessary to examine, one after; another, the events of the reign of Lewis XII. it will not be very difficult to distinguish the intentions of the Sovereign from those of the Cardinal.

George d'Amboise was the youngest of nine sons which were born to Pierre d'Amboise, Seigneur of Chaumont, first gentleman of the bedchamber[76] to Charles VII. and Lewis XI. All of them lived long enough to become very considerable in the state. Three were the roots of as many branches: five were bishops, and the last was grand master of the order St. John of Jerusalem. They had eight sisters; two of whom were abbesses, and the other six married to the greatest Seigneurs of the kingdom. George attached himself early in life to the house of Orleans. He had scarcely finished his studies when he was made chaplain to Lewis XI. although he was not yet in holy orders; his youth did not prevent his being elected, in 1475, Bishop of Montauban. Towards the end of the reign of Lewis XI. the court being divided into factions, he joined the party of the house of Orleans, which he never afterwards quitted. Madame de Beaujeu, eldest daughter of Lewis XI. to whom this monarch, on his death bed, had considered the care of the young king Charles VIII. and, I may say, the regency and government of the kingdom, soon became acquainted with the sentiments of the young bishop of Montauban, for which she could not forgive him. The prelate was justly suspected of being the accomplice of some persons who attempted to make themselves masters of the person of Charles ; he prattled with him, making him recite his prayers, or rather he pretended to make him do it. The young monarch expressed to him some desire of being released from the power of his eldest sister. The bishop informed the Duke of Orleans of it ; the king's escape, and consequently the disgrace of Madame de Beaujeu, were determined upon, when, in the interim, she was advertised of what had passed. She immediately caused the young bishop, who had just been elected archbishop of [77] Narbonne, to be arrested. The Duke of Orleans would have been in the same situation, had he not taken refuge in Bretagne . However, the imprisonment of Amboise, was not of long duration ; he protected his innocence ; to prove which, he appealed to the king himself, who not wishing to make depositions against him, he got rid of the affair.

Lewis, Duke of Orleans, was taken prisoner at the battle of St. Aubin, and conducted to the great tower of Bourget. The archbishop of Narbonne, constant in his attachment to the duke; used every effort to procure him his liberty ; and when his place of chaplain to the king was restored to him, he had recourse to the same means as before. He persuaded Charles VIII. that it was equally just and conducive to his interest, to pardon the first prince of the blood, and to take him out of prison unknown to Madame de Beaujeu.— The king followed his advice, and went himself to open the gates of the tower of Bourges for the Duke of Orleans. This prince was not ungrateful, for he contributed to the marriage of the king, with the heiress of Bretagne, although he was himself much enamoured with her, and that she had an equal passion for him. After the marriage, Madame de Beaulieu, became Duchess of Bourbon, quitted public affairs, and left the court.

The Duke of Orleans and the government of Normandy, and soon afterwards found means to change Amboise from the archbishopric of Narbonne, to that of Rouen ; and declared him, at the same time, his Lieutenant General, and Commander in Normandy. Amboise employed himself at first in restoring tranquillity to this province, which was infested with thieves and highwaymen; [78] in this he seconded the intentions of the Duke of Orleans: he regulated also his diocese with zeal and wisdom ; but he soon thought himself obliged to go to Italy, upon the service of the duke his protector; he accompanied him into the Milanese, and never left him during the two latter years, 1494 and 1495, which the prince passed there. The last year was terminated by the siege of Novara, which Lewis XI. courageously sustained. Amboise gave him not only political but military advice ; it is even said, that he sought in person, as well as several other bishops. On his return to France, he retook the administration of Normandy. It cannot be denied, that he caused complaints and murmurs, and that he was accused of being a tyrant ; but his prince defended him against this accusation, which undoubtedly he thought an unjust one, because it was very far from his own way of thinking. Charles VIII. died in 1493. Lewis XII. ascended the throne, and Amboise was

made first minister, with so much the more confidence and power, as the good king, who was willing to forget the injuries which had been done to the Duke of Orleans, made it his duty to reward those who had served him. Let us examine at present what passed during the first twelve years of the new reign, and to the death of the Cardinal; let us also examine the part which, both the one and the other had in them. The first service which the new Cardinal did his master was to dissolve his marriage with the second daughter of Lewis XI. and facilitate the means of his espousing the widow of his predecessor. It must be allowed, that this service was great, and at once conformable to, good policy, and the real inclinations of Lewis XI.; but to [79] bring it about, it was necessary to manage the worst Pope that was ever at the head of the church of Rome (Alexander VI.) ; and this was carried so far, that the king thought himself obliged to receive with the greatest honours Caesar Borgia, bastard of that unworthy pontiff, and to let him marry Charlotte d'Albret, one of the greatest matches in the kingdom, and to confer upon him dignities, and make him grants in France. If there were any political reasons which authorised this conduct in Lewis XII: they were certainly different from his way of thinking; but the minister who persuaded him, had more considerable personal interests in view he wished to form himself a party in the sacred college, and conceived already the project of succeeding Alexander VI. upon the pontifical throne. This ambitious idea made Amboise engage his master in the Italian expedition. Anne of Bretagne, was almost thrown into despair by it but her obligations to Amboise were too considerable to permit her to contradict, openly, his opinion, or to oppose his interest with the king.

The first campaigns were favourable, Lewis triumphed over Ludovico Sforza ; but the latter caused soon after a revolt in Milan ; he was punished for this and taken prisoner, as well as his brother the Cardinal Ascanio. Amboise hoping to obtain voices in the next conclave, procured the liberty of his brother Cardinal ; in which it cannot be denied, that he committed a great fault, as he gave a chief to the party in opposition to France. The

Cardinal was made governor- the Milanese, - and he pardoned, in the king's name, the people of Milan, their revolt ; this parade was still necessary to his plans of ambition. He was afterwards employed to accommodate a difference between [80] the republics of Pisa and Florence; he gave his judgment in favour of the latter, and besieged the former in person.

Alexander VI. was still alive, but very old, and as mischievous as ever ; but Amboise not wishing to lose sight, for a long time, of the court of France, returned to it in quality of Legate, which gave him an opportunity of drawing immense sums from the clergy and people, without its being known : he possessed but one benefice, which was the archbishopric of Rouen ; but he disposed of others in favour of his relations and friends, and to Italian Cardinals whom he kept in his interest.--He determined Lewis XII. to engage again in a war in Italy, upon the faith of a treaty with Ferdinand of Arragon, one of the most perfidious of Princes. This was an unfortunate war for the French ; they were deceived, and could not fail of being so, by the king of Arragon, the Pope, and his worthless son Caesar. Many of the French distinguished themselves by heroic but useless action. It became necessary at length to declare war against Ferdinand ; a fresh army was sent into Italy, and Amboise managed so well, that the Pope was restored to his former confidence in this second expedition. The Cardinal was at Rome with the French troops when Alexander the VI. died ; he then made known the project he had formed of succeeding him. He entered the conclave, was deceived and duped by the Italian Cardinals.— Francis Piccolomini, nephew to pope Pius II. was he lived under the name of Pius III. and he lived but twenty-five days. The hopes of George d'Amboise were perhaps renewed by this event; but they were soon destroyed a second time in a more open manner. Julian II. was elected, and the Cardinal Amboise ran the risk of losing his life. The new [81] pope was the declared enemy of the first minister, as well as that of France. The French lost once more the kingdom of Naples, and all Italy.—Borgia, whom Amboise thought might be of use to him, was taken prisoner and conducted into Spain, from whence he made

his escape. He commanded afterwards a French army against the king of Arragon in Navarre, where he was killed, leaving no other reputation behind him, but that of an odious and abominable heroism, which has dishonoured even his machiavelian panegyrist.

Amboise, forced to content himself with his place of first minister in France, engaged the king again in new treaties and wars, of which this monarch was the dupe. Ferdinand of Arragon, married Germaine de Foix, niece of Lewis XII. but he was not less his enemy on account of the marriage ; this alliance became another means which the king of Arragon acquired, of deceiving the king of France.

The year following, 1506, it happened fortunately, that Amboise permitted, a fault to be repaired, of which he had been the author. The king and the queen Anne had promised their daughter Claude in marriage to Charles, commonly called Count of Luxembourg, and who was afterwards the Emperor Charles the Fifth — This foreign prince would have gained, by his intended marriage, the duchy of Bretagne; and pretensions to the Milanese. The States General were assembled, who demanded loudly of the king that the alliance should not take place, but that the princess should be married to Francis of Angouleme, presumptive heir to the crown, who reigned afterwards in the name of Francis I. It may easily be judged, that the Emperor Maximilian was provoked at seeing so fine an occasion escape ; [82] however, he dissembled, and Amboise, on his part, flattering himself without reason, that he should regain the pope, undoubtedly with the idea of succeeding him, persuaded the king to aid Julian II. to seize upon Bologna. Julian was ungrateful, as might have been expected.

The Genoese revolted against Lewis XII. who repaired the mountains to subdue them ; he treated them with that mildness which was natural to his character.

In 1508, was formed the famous league of Cambray ; a great and important negotiation, of which all the honour would have fallen upon the Cardinal of Amboise, is any honour could have resulted from it ; but it was at the same time the most unjust and ill contrived treaty that could possibly have been made. It is remarkable, that in the council where this league was determined upon, there was but one man who had courage enough to shew the injustice of it, and the dangerous consequences it might be attended with; this was Stephen Poacher, keeper of the seals, and who, died archbishop of Lens. His opinion made an impression upon the wise and judicious Lewis XII. but, unfortunately for France, the Cardinal got the better of him. The king put himself at the head of his army, and gave battle at Agnadelloa, contrary to the advice of his council, and even of the Cardinal. The good prince imagined that God was for him, so much was he deceived upon the justice of his cause. He gained this battle, but his affairs were not benefited by it. The predictions of Stephen Poncher, were but too well verified. Julien II. leagued himself with the enemies of France, and even with the Venetians, in order to truth the French.

[83] In the middle of this disaster, Amboise conceived a new project of ambition ; he resolved to depose Julian II. and occupy his place, or at least be declared Patriarch and Sovereign Pontiff in France. Death put an end to his ambitious designs ; he expired at Lyons the 25th of May, 1510. Four days before he died, Lewis XII. paid him a visit, when Amboise, shedding a torrent of tears, made to the monarch a general and ministerial confession ; he acknowledged to him, that he was going to leave a considerable fortune, in the acquisition of which he had to reproach himself with many things ; he said positively that he had taken nothing from the subjects of the king ; but confessed that he had for a longtime past received a pension of sixty thousand ducats from different princes and republics of Italy ; and thirty thousand ducats from the Florentines alone. He had, moreover, received considerable presents, and amassed immense sums ; he beseeched the king to permit him to dispose of all he was

possessed of, and the good Lewis XII. granted him even more than he asked.

He made use of this liberty in his lady testament; the first article of which is singular enough, and is as follows : " I bequeath to my nephew, George of Amboise, my Archbishopric of Rouen, and all my moveables, which are valued at two millions of gold, together with the furniture of Gaillon, and the convenience of the house, such as it is. Item, to my nephew, Monsieur, the Grand Master, chief of my arms, an hundred and fifty thousand ducats of gold; my handsome cup, valued at two thousand crowns ;*[*Wherever crowns are spoken of in this manner; half crowns are to be understood.] [84] one hundred pieces of gold, each of them worth five hundred crowns; my gold plate, and five thousand marks in silver plate. Item, all my patrimony to the son of the Grand Master."

He left considerable legacies to his other nephews and sister ; ten thousand livres to the four mendicant orders, to say masses for the repose of his soul ; and wherewith to marry an hundred and fifty girls, in honour of the hundred and fifty psalms of which the psalter is composed. His funeral was the most sumptuous which had ever been given to any prelate ; his heart was left with the Celestins of Lyons ; and his body was carried to Rouen, accompanied by eleven thousand priests, twelve hundred prelates, twelve hundred gentlemen, &c.

Historians add to the recital of these obsequies, a great eulogium of this Cardinal minister: they say, that during his administration, every kind of happiness reigned in the date ; that France was never so populous, fruitful, rich or well cultivated as under his prudent management ; so much so, that as long as he lived, war was banished from the

kingdom and carried on in other places. This eulogium is justly due to the reign of Lewis XII. but is it equally so to the administration of the Cardinal Amboise? Lewis would not by any means charge his people with new imports, but

the Cardinal made him undertake expensive wars ; he proposed to him a means milder in appearance than that of increasing taxes, but whose consequences may be said to have become more pernicious ; this was the fate of offices. The chancellor Duprat, is generally accused of being the author of this venality : it is true that he was the first who regulated the sale ; but the Cardinal Amboise began to introduce [85] it, and it was only more dangerous before it became general and regular. Its abuses might be greater and more profitable to the minister who granted the permission, and through whose hands the money passed.

The Cardinal Amboise ruined the Marshal de Gie of the house of Rohan ; and it is generally agreed, that it was purely on account of his being jealous of the favour he was in with the young Francis, heir to the crown : this kind of conduct in a courtier and minister, is not less odious on account of its being rather common. Amboise might have hoped to outlive his master, for he was about the same age ; but the monarch was of a much weaker complexion. The Cardinal not having succeeded to the government of the church, continued to govern France. There is reason to believe, that under another king, he would have made a lesser shew of goodness and virtue ; but it was necessary to render that homage to the virtues of Lewis XII. and appear to second his good intentions; they were pure in the heart and character of this father of his people, but I think them very suspicious in those of his favourite.—One of the virtues of Lewis XII. was gratitude, and he would have been very sorry to have been wanting in it. He had great obligations to Amboise; from hence came the repeated acts of complaisance and deference to his advice. Lewis was oeconomical and exact in his affairs, and Amboise appeared to be the same in order to please him. Lewis XII. has been accused of avarice, but it appears that gifts, pensions and ordinary appointments never suffered the least delay during his reign. He was liberal to the Cardinal only ! yet the minister was adroit enough not to obtain any [86] very remarkable favours, but made his fortune secretly. Several ministers have been as wise, able, and reserved as Amboise ; no king was ever so good, so just, and so well disposed as Lewis XII.

ESSAY XX.

On the Character and Memoirs of Sully.

I may boast of having made known the merit of Sully, to many people who did not before sufficiently esteem this Minister of Henry IV. His Memoirs have been written under the title of *Economies Royales*, by four of his Secretaries, whom he had retained after his retreat, and who made a part of his numerous court. Although these Memoirs contain excellent things, which make, us understand how great a part Sully had in the glory and happiness of the reign of Henry IV. they are badly written, are incoherent, and charged with disagreeable calculations and details. An edition in folio, which is called *V. V. Verts*, is particularly esteemed, because there are in it some anecdotes of particular families, who desired afterwards they might be suppressed. I engaged, at least indirectly, a man of sense, and who writes well, to digest the Memoirs of Sully, and to render[87] them more pleasant to read.*[*The Memoirs of Sully, arranged methodically, by the Abbe de C. Ecluse, appeared in three volumes in 4to. in 1747] I am persuaded that when this great man shall be better known, people in general will be as enthusiastic as I am, in their admiration of him. I am become passionately fond of him ; I have got his portrait framed, and have placed it before my secretaire, to have it continually before my eyes, in order to call to mind his features, principles and conduct.—I approve of the noble and simple manner in which he made his fortune, by the best of all means : by serving well his matter he could not fail of pleasing him ; by pleasing him he deserved to obtain considerable gratuities, but he never sucked the blood of the people : he never received any thing from foreigners to betray his prince and country. It cannot be said that a man who contrived to save his king thirty-six millions of livres out of his treasures made depredations upon the finances. I even admire his retreat; it was as great and noble as the means by which he made his fortune : he had a numerous family, lived in his castles like a prince, was respected by his relations, and gave subsistence to those who became old

in his service. I see nothing in all this but what is highly praise-worthy. It was just that he should make a figure according to the titles he had acquired by having deserved them : he remembered the good he had done, and wished still to serve the state ; but he did not wish to be harassed with the cares of it. A Minister out of place is no longer stunned with the buzzing of flatterers, who strive to persuade him to grant unjust favours : but he [88] judges calmly and in peace the conduct of his successors, and of the good or bad success with which their measures are attended. He is no longer before the curtain; but if he remains in his country, the theatre is not at so great a distance from him as to prevent his deciding upon the merit of the actors.

I even like the manner in which, politically speaking, Sully understood his religion : he was a Calvinist, and without doubt, he was so from conviction ; but very far from being either a fanatic or rebel,—even after the death of Henry IV. he refused to put himself at the head of the Huguenot party, as soon as a revolt became in question. It was not required of him to sacrifice his opinion in matter of faith ; and on his part, he never made his manner of thinking a pretext to disturb the public repose. His first profession was that of a soldier and engineer, and the first sciences he studied were those of war, gunnery, and fortification. He learnt them well, and in the exercise of them he never lost that coolness and combination which are equally necessary in war, and in the administration of affairs. It was undoubtedly a long time before he suspected that he was destined to be a Minister of State and Superintendant of Finances. But let us not deceive ourselves in thinking that political principles require much study ; when a man has a turn for great affairs, he soon surpasses his masters in this kind of study : moreover he obtains perfect knowledge of them by practice. With respect to the administration of finances, it is a matter of calculation; it is necessary to form a plan, and it soon appears whether or not profit will arise from pursuing it. A financier must not be daunted by the multiplicity of branches which he has to make fruitful. When he has found a central point, it is the business of clerks to combine [89] these proceedings with the

principles of the Minister ; but they must be constant and invariable, and have been formed before he entered into place ; for it is too late to tamper when once he is charged with the most important administration.

M. de Sully has been reproached with being too severe ; but who knows is he were so by character, or by a kind of necessity, which the conduct of his master Henry imposed upon him ? This Prince, the best who ever lived, was weak, often in love, accustomed moreover to seek expedients and resources, such as are found in the midst of civil wars, and to recompense his partisans, by giving them the spoils of his enemies. If Sully had left him to act he would have done more harm to his affairs than his Minister could have done good ; but it was very necessary that Sully should be negative, because Henry IV. was generous, and that his generosity stood in need of being kept within bounds. In matters of bounty, the King and the Minister should always understand each other, that either one or the other may appear difficult; according to the natural order of things, the master should be so ; but when he will not, the Minister is indispensably obliged to put on that character. The best means of diminishing the embarrassments of both, is to agree upon certain principles never to be departed from ; for is once either the King or the Minister counteract them, they will be importuned for the most unjust gratifications, and will make themselves enemies by the most reasonable refusals.

The character of M. de Sully was something like that of Cato ; but we need only read his Memoirs to be persuaded, that his Catonian firmness was founded upon the real interests of the state, and that neither humour nor malice had any thing to do with it. It even appears that he was a man of [90] feeling, and several articles in his Memoirs prove it. We have reason to believe that his anecdotes are true, because they were not contradicted by any contemporary author; consequently we ought to believe what he says of himself ; part of it is as follows : He believed that it was better to gain the esteem of little people, and to console them, than to be complaisant to the

great : he knew that these frequently abuse the attentions which are paid them, and that the suffrages and applause of the former are the real foundation of the reputation and satisfaction of a good Minister.

He studied but very little during his military or political life: he read in his retreat, but it was not, said he, so much to store his mind as to improve his reason. He protected and rewarded men of letters, but they had very little access to him : he listened to every advice which was given him, but he looked upon no particular one as an infallible inspiration, and did not adopt it till after mature reflection. How could he, who had so frequently resisted the orders of his master, submit himself blindly to those of others ? He introduced the greatest order into his private affairs; he said, that the manner in which a Minister conducts his own affairs, shews how he will conduct those of his master. In fact, although a man charged with the affairs of state may have but little time to think of domestic details, he may always lay down certain principles for the government of his house and private affairs, as well as for the objets which are interesting to the nation, and consign the one to his steward as he does the other to his secretaries and clerks. There are none but little minds which trouble themselves with minutia; great geniuses adopt just and clear principles, and regulate their actions accordingly.

[91] Nature had given M. de Sully an excellent constitution ; his visage was majestic, mild and agreeable ; that severity which appeared in his conduct was not written in his countenance ; a proof that it was not natural to him, and that it was owing to circumstances. He was temperate, slept little, and endured every kind of fatigue : the fatigues of war had accustomed him to those of administration.

The reputation of M. de Sully was never, as I have before observed, so great as it deserved to be ; but it will, on this account, be more brilliant and solid, when particular and personal prejudices being dissipated, men shall judge of

his administration by the great effects it produced. It was under him that the finances began to be regulated, commerce extended, and population encreased.

[92] ESSAY XXI.

Character of Cardinal Fleury, and Sully, compared.

We have at present a prime Minister M. le Cardinal de Fleury, who possesses a part of the virtues of M. de Sully—his principal qualities appear nevertheless to be of an interior kind: but perhaps this difference is wholly due to their situations and the circumstances of the times in which they lived. One was a military man, the other is an ecclesiastic : Sully had seen and experienced all the miseries of a civil war; he had order and oeconomy to reestablish in every department ; M. de Fleury has only to maintain that order which is already wisely established: finally, Sully, met with contradictons from his master, and thinking himself obliged to refill them, he was more attentive to oppose nothing but the public welfare to authority, which, except in this case, ought always be decisive. The Cardinal meets with no opposition, except upon trifling subjects. I am persuaded that he would resist stronger ones ; and it is perhaps a misfortune for him that he has not had such to encounter.

Sully was the Minister of the nation, because he loved it, and saw that it stood in need of assistance, and that it was necessary to repair its losses, and make it enjoy happiness under a good King. [93] Richelieu, on the contrary, was a brilliant Minister, and feared by a King, whose absolute authority he established, because it was confided to him and remained in his hands. Cardinal Fleury is at the same time Minister of the King and of the nation, and the time will come, when justice will be done to him as well as to M. de Sully. It is said, that his genius is not great, but we are in an age which does not require a man of that description:

he has at least an amiable mind, a great knowledge of the world and the court, is agreeable, and polite, even gallant with decency ; nor does he ask inconsistently with the gravity, of any of the characters with which he is invested. His ministerial qualities are, justness of thinking, solidity in his views and intentions, frankness and sincerity to strangers ; a policy refined enough, but not deceitful. He knows how to avoid the snares laid for him by courtiers, without using perfidious and machiavelian means; he takes care to hazard no useless expense, and especially not to lead the nation on in the pursuit of chimerical objects ; he shews much disinterestedness and moderation in his personal expenses; he avoids all kind of pomp, thinking it more noble to live above it; his conduct in this respect is the shield which he opposes to those who ask him extraordinary favours, which would only serve to feed their luxury. Finally, this Minister seems calculated to encrease our happiness without changing it ; this is all we can desire : for France is at present in a situation to say, Let the Gods take nothing from me--this is all I ask.

[94] ESSAY XXII.

Encomium of M. de Chauvelin, Subminister to Fleury.

There is at this time rising under the eyes of the Cardinal Fleury a new Minister, whose merit and abilities it is not easy to appreciate, because he does not act ostensibly ; and whilst in secret with a superior, it is difficult to judge to which of the two, the success of many affairs ought to be attributed. At present, he has but the rank of what was called, under the Cardinal de Richelieu, a Sub-minister : but is he be obliged to act according to the ideas of others, or at most: improve them, it may be imagined, that on account of his extensive knowledge, his application to business, the manner in which he decides upon matters, the attention he pays to what is said to him, and his manner of answering, shews that he will one day be a very superior man, if his authority become so great as not to be restrained, except

by that of the King, which has never yet appeared to be very embarrassing. He has the department of foreign affairs, although he has never been employed in any embassy; but he knows the world by means of geography and history; the Courts of Europe by relations on which he can depend; and in truth, when a person is not profoundly ignorant, and has discernment [95] enough to judge of men, and to appreciate their interests, even those of the day and moment, he may do without much travelling. What is a minister of foreign affairs, who has been in all the Courts of Europe ? Those who have been most employed, have nothing but old memoirs of such courts as they have formerly been sent to. M. de Chauvelin is a Magistrate and Keeper of the Seals, and as he has discharged the functions of magistracy in a distinguished manner, he knows well the laws and rules of the Kingdom : it is in this that he is very useful to the Cardinal, who has never had an opportunity of studying them. He gives him information upon these objects; and who knows to what a degree he guides him in his proceedings ? M. le Chancelier d'Aguesseau, although virtuous and learned, is rather obscure, and decides with difficulty. A man in his situation ought to determine quickly, but regularly : generally speaking, great magistrates would be good ministers; they apply to business, they hear and decide, they seize the point of difficulty and that which is to fix their opinion, they understand the principles, and know how to apply them : and has a minister any thing more to do ?

[Note of the Editor—The author wrote the two preceding articles as well as all the others in 1736, but his death not happening till 1756, he had time, in reading them over again, to make reflections founded upon posterior events : they are in his manuscript upon separate sheets, but it is not known precisely in what year he committed them to paper;—they are as follows :]

At the end of the year 1736, all the eulogiums which I had written of M. le Cardinal de Fleury and of M. Chauvelin, the hopes I had conceived of the benefit which might result from a good [96] understanding between them, were proved to be just and well founded. I wrote, as I do at

present, for my own amusement, or at most for the use' s my children after my death, that which I say, believed and thought, without prejudice, and having no interest to deceive any body. The Cardinal covered himself with honour, by concluding a peace which procured to the King Lorraine, a province full of riches and resources, and which cost the union little or nothing to acquire : our military men had distinguished themselves ; we had been every where successful, although our Generals had sometimes committed great Faults.— The Kingdom was not exhausted either of money or treasure ; France enjoyed an interior calm and was renowned abroad ; but the courtiers played the Keeper of the Seals a trick, or rather the Cardinal, of which he felt the cruel effects for the six last years of his life. They persuaded him that the intended successor to his place and authority, was tired of waiting ; that he had an ardent desire to possess what he looked upon to be his inheritance ; and was capable of making his situation disagreeable, in order to oblige him to give it up sooner than he otherwise wished to do. The Cardinal, who perhaps a few days before he entered the ministry, had no great ambition for the place, was ten years afterwards afraid of losing it : so true it is that men soon accustom themselves to sovereign power. He strove to discover if what had been told him was true, and I can easily believe that some affirmative proofs were given him : this was done without much difficulty ; but he forgot that he was eighty years of age, that an assistant became daily more necessary to him ; and that without some such aid, he must necessarily be the tool of intrigue ; that even in the course of ordinary [97] ordinary affairs he would have nobody to point him out expedients, and whom he would be able to make what is called a right hand man. He thought he revenged himself upon a traitor, and he ruined a man who was necessary to him : he took extraordinary measures which proved his credit with the King, of which nobody had the least doubt. His Majesty had never had a single conversation in private with M. de Chauvelin, his manner was displeasing to him ; but the courtiers, more artful than the first Minister, saw that as the Cardinal could on one hand obtain every thing of the King, they should afterwards be able to obtain whatever they pleased of the

Minister ; even things the most contrary to the principles and welfare of the state.

The Emperor Charles VI. had acted in favour of France, with no other idea than that of engaging her to become guarantee of his pragmatic sanction, or the act which was to insure the succession of his states to his eldest daughter. The Cardinal had promised him this, and the reputation which the Cardinal had till then enjoyed, of being virtuous and sincere, made the Emperor easy upon the effect of that promise; therefore, Charles VI. died in 1740, in the pleasing persuasion that his daughter and his son-in-law would inherit his crowns ; and that if any power should disturb them in their possessions, France would fly to their assistance. The Queen of Spain was the only discontented person, because she had no establishment in Italy for her second son : however unjust this pretension might be, it would have been possible to satisfy her, without undertaking to destroy the new House of Austria. But the man who, like a wise and great politician, would have been [98] able to make, this arrangement was in exile at Bourges. More dangerous and less delicate negotiator, or rather intriguers, deranged the head of the first Minister, who was eighty-six years of age, and the destruction of the House of Austria was resolved upon : he was taught to look upon this as a thing so easy of execution, that he would have reproached himself severely, if he had let slip so favourable an opportunity of effacing even the remembrance of Charles Vth's pretensions to universal monarchy. The poor Cardinal was so convinced of the truth of what was proposed to him, that his only objection was the great expense France would be put to by the enterprize : he feared, lest it should exhaust her treasures, and overturn his system of oeconomy. He was given to understand, that France had only to shew herself, or that at most, it could only cost her a few men and a little money : he suffered himself to be prevailed upon;--he gave more than he was willing to do, but much less than was necessary. He died disgraced in the eyes of all Europe, betrayed by one part of his allies, and detested by the other, having neglected to conciliate himself the friendship of those whom he ought by all means to have made sure of,

such as the King of Sardinia, &c. He left France in the greatest distress, engaged in a naval war, without his having taken measures either to prevent it or carry it on. Solon said to Croesus, that no man could be called happy before his death ; and may not it equally be said, that a Minister is never certain of being to the end of his life, a wise, virtuous and able politician.

[99] ESSAY XXIII.

On Beneficence.

My good friend the Abbe de St. Pierre; who has laid so many plans for the good of the public, has never had the satisfaction of even seeing one of them succeed. His successes are confined to establishing the reputation of a single word, which is beneficence. But is this word as generally understood, as it has been enthusiastically adopted? No : every one interprets and praises this virtue according to his own manner. Upon the whole, beneficence implies as much as charity; but this old devout expression, with which our pulpits ring, appears no longer proper for our men of the world, who pretend to have no further need of thinking of God to do good actions.—Let us not disturb these gentlemen in their system of beneficence; is they be really desirous of following it, let them satisfy themselves. I remember to have heard a very severe devotee complain to a Jesuit, a man of great sense, that her daughter-in-law, was humane and generous, but had no merit, as she said, in her good actions, because she did not do them in the sight of God.—Let her alone, Madam,—let her alone, said the cunning Jesuit, he will gain Paradise without suspecting it.

[100] Well, let us be beneficent, since we blush to be charitable ; but let us beware of deceiving ourselves in the manner of exercising our beneficence; let us regulate it according to time, place and circumstances. There are acts

of beneficence adapted to every situation : that of kings, resembles the beneficence of particulars in the principle only, but it is much more extensive in its effects. The individual does services to men one by one ; the monarch, by a stroke of his pen, makes thousands happy. People in place may do good in proportion, each according to his station. In the first moments, we ought only to consider the degree of sufferings and misery, or the danger of him whom we wish to succour. But except in unforeseen cases, it is necessary to be more circumspect. There are services which a man might render, thinking himself disposed to do so by beneficence, and which might be misunderstood ; such are those which would do more harm to others, than good to those he wished to oblige. The conclusion is ; that it is not sufficient to desire to be beneficent, it is equally necessary to know how to be so.

[101] ESSAY XXIV.

On Self-Love.

Self-love is not generally to be blamed; in the first place to condemn it, would be ineffectual, since we cannot entirely divest ourselves of it. It is necessary that a man should love himself, but, as one of my friends, a man of great sense, said, in every thing which is good and honourable, as he loves a virtuous woman whom he wishes to marry, and not as an unhappy wretch whom he wishes to debauch.

ESSAY XXV.

Ideas of Happiness various amongst Philosophers.

The end of philosophy has ever been to make men happy ; but the different sense of philosophers have sought this end by different ways. The Stoics pretended, that the only

means of finding it was to resist every evil, to become insensible of [102] misery, pain, chagrin and inquietude. They might be right; in fact, when we are free from all evil, happiness comes of itself; but how great is the difficulty of being thus exempt, especially when we do not think of preventing misery, but wait its arrival with unconcern and a stoic firmness.--The Epicureans, on the contrary, sought happiness and even pleasures; but perhaps the more pleasure is sought after, the less it is found. Let us be of neither one sect nor the other, but wisely put away from ourselves, that which may become prejudicial; let us pave the way to happiness and to lost and peaceful pleasures in which it really consists ; but do not let us be anxious to call for it, neither fatigue ourselves by running after riches and voluptuousness ; these are like birds which only require their nests to be prepared, and which come of themselves to depose their eggs in them.

To increase the happiness of those who are about us, appears to me an excellent means of prolonging our own.

[103] ESSAY XXVI.

On the Doctrine of Chances applied to Life.

The English are known to be great calculators, great bettors, and to wish to reduce every thing to analysis and probability. We have already translated into French their calculations upon the probabilities of the duration of human life, the analysis of all the games of chance, and rules for gaining at them, as well as in lotteries, in spite of the decrees of fate. One of my friends, who has been sometime in England, has carried this spirit of calculation still farther than even the English; he makes a problem of every thing to have the pleasure of resolving it ; he measures the extent of his pleasures, his pains, his friendship, and his hatred. With respect to love, he agrees that, when it is real, it is commensurable. Not content to

have found out new rules for games of chance, he has undertaken to calculate how much is to be ascribed to hazard, and how much to the skill of the player in games of commerce, especially at*[*Something like Backgammon.] trictrac and piquet. After having amused myself with his researches upon this subject, which he believes to be an important one, I asked him if he could<> also calculate what part fortune[104] had in the life of men who had made most: noise in the world, considering on one hand the situations they were in, and on the other their personal merit. The same principles may be applied to them, said he, as to players at piquet. This idea made me smile ; I amused myself with it for some time as we continued our walk, (for we were in the country) ; and we brought upon the carpet several persons with whom we were both acquainted. On our return to the city, I committed to paper a part of what had been advanced in this singular conversation, and which is as follow :

The sum played for, signifies nothing to the skill of the player, nor to the chances which may derange all his measures ; it is sufficient that he be interested in the game, so as to give it his whole attention. In like manner those to whom nature has given the greatest talents, employ them in places where they first drew breath, conformable to their situation and the circumstances they have to encounter. All the ability of a village parson, who prays ever so well at piquet, gains him nothing more than a few crowns at the end of the year, even with the assistance of aces; whilst he who plays against rich, financiers with the same superiority, sometimes encreases his income some thousand guineas. The simple monk, born with a great disposition to intrigue, discards his rival, parries the strokes of his adversaries, does nothing without reflection, and at length succeeds ; and to what ? to become superior, and govern a community, or at most a province of monks. It is by the same means that a courtier becomes a favourite, a prime minister, and governs despotically a great empire. The republican who wishes to rise above equality, and become master of his [105] countrymen, follows the same route. Wherever ambition, interest, or

gallantry is concerned, it is only necessary to be prudent, like as at play, not to suffer the head to turn, and to make a proper use of all the advantages which fortune presents to us. But as it is remarked, that there are players at piquet, whose chief excellence is to discard well, others whose whole superiority consists in playing the cards, and some who are wholly attached to betting, knowing the gain this produces at the end of the partie ; so there are men of ambition whose only care is to remove all obstacles to obtain their end; others, wherever they may be placed, strive to take advantage of their situation ; and finally, some who wish to consolidate their fortunes, and insure their reputations, persuaded that they have done nothing well if they, do not crown their actions by something brilliant.

After all, many games are won contrary to every rule, and others lost; not withstanding all the art of the most skilful players ; in the same manner there are events which disconcert the greatest connoisseurs; but these are real phenomenons, and notwithstanding such extraordinary inflames, it is necessary to follow those principles of conduct which are generally received and approved of.

[106] ESSAY XXVII.

Cardinal Alberoni's Origin and Character.

The Cardinal Alberoni is One of those phenomenons of which I have just spoken, and may be compared to the great player, M. Wall, whom we know at present in Paris, and who has made his fortune, as it is reported, with an orange which was given to him ; he played it against a crown, hazarded the crown against others, and gained insensibly a considerable sum. By hazarding fortunately he has realised several millions of livres. Alberoni staked less and gained more ; at least in dignities and reputation. He was the son of a gardener, and at first a ringer in the

cathedral of Plaisance. The bishop took a liking to him, and finding him active and intelligent, made him his secretary, and gave him a canonry. He had occasion to know the Duke of Vendome in Parma, and he pleased him by meannesses of which an Italian priest alone is capable ; the Duke attached him to his service, brought him to France, and took him afterwards into Spain. Vendome wanting a faithful and discreet agent near the Princess des Urfin, sent her Alberoni. This Italian, as pliant in appearance as audacious in reality, persuaded the princess, who governed Philip V. in the most absolute manner, during the time that this monarch was a widower, that she ought to make him marry the Princess of [107] Parma. This marriage was accomplished, and the disgrace of the Princess des Urfin was the consequence. Alberoni took upon himself to lead the new Queen. She procured him the cardinal's hat ; he became her first minister, and consequently that of the king her husband. He displayed immediately the whole extensor his views, both in Spain and elsewhere ; he re-established the king's authority in the Government, and made use of it to correct many abuses, and to begin several important establishments which deserved to be encouraged. The population and commerce of Spain were interested in them. He made a military reformation, and put the army upon a more useful and regular footing. He had never been more than secretary to a general, but had seen enough of armies, to judge of what was necessary to establish in them order and discipline ; this is what a minister ought to attend to. His duty is to see that troops are well regulated, and in a good state, before the general who is to command is charged with them. Alberoni employed himself successfully also in the administration and regulation of finances. This interior arrangement was necessary to prepare for the execution of the great views which he had abroad. These were no less than to make Spain the arbitress of Europe, to insure her Italy, and to give employment enough to the Emperor, to England and Holland, (which were then called maritime powers) to prevent them from opposing his designs. For this purpose, he formed alliances in the north, and even one with the Turks. It unfortunately happened, that particular circumstances made France an enemy to the Duke of Orleans, who was regent. He carried on, with

ability, audacious intrigues to insure Philip V. the crown of France in case [108] that the young King Lewis XV. should die. But with whatever prudence so many great enterprizes were formed and carried on, some of them crossed each other in such a manner, as to make it impossible that they should all succeed. Peace was made between France and Spain, and Alberoni fell a victim to it. He supported the disgrace and persecution, which were its first consequences, like a great man : in fact he was one. He law that he was a victim from circumstances, and not on account of any fault he had committed. His desire had been like that of Richelieu, to serve his master ; but time, place, and even his master were very different.

Alberoni, at length enjoying tranquillity in Rome, obtained the legation of Romagna, and distinguished himself again by undertaking a conquest for the Pope as Temporal Sovereign ; this was the little Republic of St. Marino, a village situated near Rimini, upon an eminence. The enterprize had all the appearance of a parody of the heroic comedies which Alberoni had performed in Spain, twenty years before. At least this comparison ought to be applied: to him, drawn from piquet players,--that a ruined gamester, although able; conducts himself in the same manner when playing at sixpence a f ish, as he formerly did when playing for guineas a point.

Since it is agreed, that all the books we have printed under the title of *Testamens politiques*, are nothing but historical romances, there could not be a better, than the political Testament of Alberoni.*[*Note of the Editor. It has been since published and is tolerably well written.]

[109] ESSAY XXVIII.

Character of the Prince of Conde.

The great Conde was born with so strong a military genius, that, by a sort of natural impulse, I will say almost

instinct, he chose the best posts, ranged his troops in the most advantageous manner, supported the different bodies of his army by each other, made them attack with vigour, sought courageously at their head, never lost his composure even in the heat of battle, saw every thing which happened, and took advantage of every incident in such a manner as not to let the least favourable one escape him. This hero in war was but a very middling politician at court. He knew not how to act opportunely. The honour he had acquired gave him at first some weight ; but his capacity being tried in councils and intrigues, he was found inferior to his reputation. He was incapable of application and reflection ; he committed imprudences, and several weaknesses, and was even frequently guilty of injustice. War had hardened his heart, and he began rather late to cultivate his mind. Is the advantages of birth had not given him the command of armies, whilst he was yet in the flowerpot his age; if the time in which he lived had not been full of troubles and continual wars, but pacific like our own, his military talents would have been lost, and M. le Prince de Conde, would never have borne the surname of Great [110] Conde, being made a tool of by the Cardinal Mazarine and the Spaniards, into whose states he had been obliged to retire, returned to France after the peace of the Pyrenees : he found himself as great a warrior as ever, and it appeared that he had lost none of his military merit. He beat, at Senes, the same enemies of France, at the head of which he had fought Turenne, at the battle of Dunes ; this proves more strongly, that he was born with those talents which make great generals, and not with such as would be useful to kings in their councils, and are necessary to ministers.

ESSAY XXIX.

Character of Marshal Turenne.

M. de Turenne, of a less illustrious birth, and whole reputation in war was not so brilliant as that of the Prince of Conde, had, perhaps upon the whole, as much military

merit. He placed it in the most advantageous point of view, because his talents were distinguished and procured him employment. He had, perhaps, others which his extreme modesty, and reserved character hindered him from making known ; he was thought capable of being at the head of a party because he refused it. But if his military superiority was balanced by that of M. de Conde, the qualities of his mind were always looked upon to be superior [111] to those of his rival. He was as composed in the cabinet as in the field ; and this hero in war was a mild and amiable individual in society. He did not become a Catholic till it was too late to suspect his change of religion, to proceed from motives of ambition or interest. His death was equally regretted by the soldiers, and people ; an eulogium which no General had merited since the glorious ages of the Roman Republic and Empire.

ESSAY XXX.

Character and Military Service of the Duke of Vendome.

The Duke of Vendome was born, like the Great Conde, inspired with the science of war; he had the same courage, the same coolness in the midst of the greatest dangers, the same just and rapid coup-d'oeil; but these advantages were counterbalanced by great defects. I have never seen him personally, but I have had occasion to speak of him to so many military men who had served under his command, that I am not deceived in what I have just said of him.

After having served as a volunteer under the Great Conde, as Colonel and a General officer under Marshal Luxembourg, the command of the army was given to him at the beginning of the war for the Spanish succession. He was sent into Italy in 1702, and during three or four of [112] the first campaigns, he supported the honour of the King's arms, and gained four battles, two of them before the defection of the Duke of Savoy, and two afterwards; yet he had to do with the famous Prince Eugene, who understood the art of war better than any man of the age

in which he lived ; provided in the best manner for every thing which could happen, knew better than any body how to subsist an army ; and conducted it with wisdom, coolness, and reflection, <into such situations as were capable of rendering it the most useful. M. de Vendome was not so profound in his designs, made fewer reflections and

combinations in preparing for his operations : he was too neglectful of detail; but in critical and decisive moments, he awoke, as it were, from a trance; seemed to recall his whole genius; took measures equally wise and vigorous ; and shewed more heroism and judgment than even the Prince Eugene would perhaps have done in a similar situation. The French soldiers, whom he did not subject to too severe a discipline, had so much confidence in his measures, that they would have risked every thing to have withdrawn him from any disagreeable situation into which he might have fallen. They feared nothing when they saw him at their head ; and were persuaded that to go into battle under his command was to be led on to glory. It is generally believed, that a perfidious policy recalled, him from Piedmont, and sent him into Flanders; and that when there, he had not time enough to repair the faults which the Marshal Villeroy had committed. He was afterwards sent into Spain, without any body to second him, without an army or any kind, of succour; but his name and reputation, added to the former confidence of the French who had served under him some years before, made up [113] every deficiency : he reconducted Philip V. almost driven from his possessions, to Madrid ; pursued the enemies, forced them to evacuate Spain, and retire into Portugal. This was the fruit of the famous battle of Villa Viciosa, in 1710. Covered with glory, (which seemed to seek him rather than he to run after it) with honours, which he thought himself, as he really was, superior to, and with riches which he neglected and despised, he died at Vinaros in Catalonia, of an indigestion, a kind of death which appears little worthy of one of the greatest and most able Generals of the age, but which answered otherwise well enough to his private life; for it must be agreed that this made a great contrast with his military one. His character was mild and beneficent ; he was a stranger to envy, hatred and revenge; he prided himself in thus

resembling Henry IV. he was neither haughty, vain nor ostentatious; and fully persuaded that nobody could have a desire to be wanting in respect: to him; effectively, he never had reason to think to the contrary. The princes of the blood only could dispute with him in France the superiority of rank, and he never had the least difference about it but with them : and even these, were always terminated in the most honourable and becoming manner.

Such was the Duke of Vendome, considered in the most favourable light. Let us at present examine what he was, according to other Memoirs, perhaps as faithful, in a less advantageous point of view. He was of a middling size, and had a vigorous constitution ; his figure and air were noble, his look and conversation graceful: he had great natural sense, which was but little cultivated; he was even profoundly ignorant in the art of war, which he had never studied [114] or reflected upon; brave even to intrepidity, daring when he could : get the better of his indolence; he was generally successful by what may be called an effect of his happy star; he knew as much of the world and the court as he did of war, and in the same manner, by routine, and without any regular principles ; notwithstanding this, he pleased every body, though he was no courtier, except to the King alone; and he made all the rest perceive that he was the son of Henry IV. and that he ought not to cede, except to the legitimate descendants of that monarch. This kind of vanity pleased Lewis XIV. who having, like his grandfather, natural children, wished to make them equal to the princes of the blood. The Duke of Vendome was not excessively polite, and was reserved with those whom he thought capable of opposing him ; but he affected to be familiar and popular with the lowest rank of officers, with the soldiers, and those of his servants, whom he believed incapable of abusing his goodness. Obstinate and inaccessible to the counsels and representations of those who would have been attended to by any other man ; he suffered himself to be governed by such only as were extravagant in their praises of him, and in their admiration and respect for his person and qualities. As soon as it was perceived in the army that this was the means to obtain his confidence, there were found

in the most distinguished military rank, men base enough to flatter his weaknesses, in hopes that he would put them in a situation to make their fortunes. He carried, particularly in the decline of life, libertinism, slovenliness and indolence to so great an excess, that it is inconceivable these defects were not more prejudicial to him. In the midst of the court of Lewis XIV. sometimes [115] a gallant, sometimes a devotee, he, made no secretion his most indecent and culpable pleasures ; and Lewis XIV. dared not reproach him upon a kind of debauch, which during the whole time of his reign, would have ruined any other subject. Every thing, which the court of Versailles would have blushed at, was openly braved in the little court of Anet. Those who served under him in his Italian campaign have assured me, that he had by mere indolence missed more than twenty times the finest opportunities of beating the enemy; and that he had by negligence as frequently exposed his army to be destroyed: but happily those who commanded the wings and in the rear, were more attentive and vigilant.

Everybody has heard talk of the cool of the morning of M. de Vendome, an expression which is still made use of to describe a march made in the heat of the day : this comes from the custom M. de Vendome had of announcing in the evening, that he would march very early the next morning; but when the moment indicated for departure arrived, he lay so long in bed, that it was generally noon before he was in motion; the warmest climates and seasons made no difference in this respect.

The greatest advantage he had over Prince Eugene, was in defeating his calculations, by making none himself. As he never took his departure from any place at the time he had previously fixed upon, no spy could give intelligence of his motions. He held no councils with his general officers, so that nobody ever knew what he meant to do; he began a campaign without any settled plan, and gave himself but little trouble about those sent him by the court; therefore his designs might well be said to be impenetrable. His audacity and penetration in great operations [116]

repaired all his faults. It was only in the campaign he made in Flanders in 1708, where he had under his command, the Duke of Burgundy, presumptive heir to the crown, that his obstinacy in not taking every possible advantage, made him lose a battle, and all the fruit of a campaign which might have been happily terminated. The French army was encamped near Oudenarde ; it was easy to take possession of that place, which was badly fortified, and to cut off all supplies from the enemy; but to effect this, it was necessary to anticipate them, before they would perceive it was possible to distress them. M. de Vendome was frequently advertised of this, but as it did not come from those, who by their meanness had gained his confidence, he took no notice of what was laid to him upon the subject.

Marlborough, who commanded the enemies army, soon saw that M. de Vendome had only his motion to make, and that it was necessary to oppose him. But he could not approach Oudenarde, without making a considerable circuit, and he might arrive there too late for his purpose the Duke of Burgundy went himself to prevail upon M. de Vendome to act without delay ; he could not make him shake off his indolence, nor persuade him to quit the place he was in. Finally, M. de Biron, Lieutenant General, who commanded a corps de reserve, sent word, that the enemy approached, and went himself to confirm this advice. M. de Vendome refused obstinately for some time to believe it: at length M. de Biron ran to his corps, and put himself in the best possible posture of defence. The general had permitted him to do this upon condition only, that the enemy was near charging. The order was imprudent enough, but Biron was obliged to execute it ; for the engagement began immediately between his advanced posts and the enemy [117] which came to reconnoitre them. Marlborough reinforced those who had begun the attack, and Biron did the same to his advanced posts. It became necessary for M. de Vendome to march, and it was in this manner that the battle of Oudenarde began. Not withstanding the valour of the French troops, the efforts of the king's guards and the personal bravery of the Duke of Burgundy, the ground not being favourable, because it had not been chosen, neither were the manoeuvres prepared,

the success was not advantageous to us. Some troops were necessarily sacrificed to favour the retreat of the army, which was made to Ghent. The Duke of Burgundy did not remain in that city, but retired with the head of the army, behind the canal of Bruges. M. de Vendome, on the contrary, stopped at Ghent to repose himself after the fatigues of a day, whereon he had given greater proofs of bravery, than of judgment. As soon as the Duke of Burgundy was fixed in his general quarters, he wrote to the king, informing his Majesty of what had passed; but he was delicate in what he said about the Duke of Vendome, knowing that the king loved him ; M. de Vendome wrote also, and assured the king that he had gained the battle, and that if his success had not been complete, it was not his fault. Lewis XIV. was pleased to believe him, although France and all -Europe were informed to the contrary. M. de Vendome did not lose the favour of his master which he ought to have done; on the contrary, the king believed that the Duke of Burgundy would never make a good officer, and that it was useless to continue to send him to the army. If he judged by what passed before, and at the battle of Oudenarde, this great monarch was deceived. The liege of Lillo, which the enemies undertook the following [118] year, proved clearly what was the consequence of the loss of that battle : nevertheless, M. de Vendome was sent the next year to save Spain ; and whose presence alone procured an army, which regained Philip V. his capital, beat the enemy at Villa Viciosa, and gave the young king the most magnificent bed which was ever prepared for a sovereign, being composed of the ensigns of his enemies ; but it was only necessary to excite the enthusiasm of the Spaniards and of the French who were in Spain. The name of Vendome had this effect. His reputation, justly or unjustly merited, frightened Staremberg and Stanhope, and his daring character and determined bravery did the rest. Yet his end, which is so brilliant in history, was melancholy and unhappy. After having passed the year 1711, in triumphing over the enemies of Philip V he had no sooner received at Madrid all the honours which this king could confer upon his liberator;—the title of Highness,—the pre-eminence over all the Grandees of Spain,—in short, all the distinctions formerly enjoyed by the famous. Don Juan of Austria, than he grew tired of this Spanish

greatness; and leaving the court of Madrid, and the conduct of the army to his Lieutenant Generals, he retired to a burgh of Catalonia, called Vinaros ; surrounded there by a small circle of flatterers and debauchees, he gave himself up to that kind of voluptuousness which was so agreeable to him. He glutted himself with fish, which he was extravagantly fond of ; whether it were good or bad, well or ill dressed, it was the same thing to him ; he drank thick bodied and heady wine ; and at length brought on a kind of indigestion, or rather an illness, the consequence of repeated indigestions, which might [119] undoubtedly have been cured by diet and exercise. His disorder was treated in quite a contrary manner; and, he had very soon no hopes left of being, restored. The most honest of his Courtiers then abandoned him; others took his furniture and equipage; and it is affected, that seeing, a few moments before he expired, some of his under Valets ready to take away and divide his bedcloaths, he asked them as a favour to permit him to draw his last breath in his bed.—He was only sixty-eight years of age when he died. The Princess des Ursins, who had at that time the greatest influence with the king of Spain, got orders for his body to be laid in the Royal Tomb of the Escorial. The most elegant funeral orations were delivered in honour of him, both in France and Spain. These have served to deceive posterity with respect to his real character; and no historian whom I have heard of has yet given himself the trouble to undeceive it.

I have heard several anecdotes, related by persons who lived with M. de Vendome, of his cynical slovenliness, and which are of so singular a nature, that I would mention them if they were not more disgusting than ridiculous. It was by applauding his filthiness, that the Cardinal Alberoni made his fortune: so true it is that men succeed in this by every kind of means, and the Italian priests and monks are not scrupulous about any.

The Duke of Vendome had a younger brother, who possessed all his good qualities and his defects, but in a less proportion. On this account he has acquired less honour,

and his memory will be less revered by posterity. But M. le grand Prior of Vendome, was sufferable in the world and in private society ; he was even looked upon, towards the end of his life, as an amiable [120] voluptuary ; and he died, at the age of seventy-two years, beloved and regretted by, men of sense, who were fond of his company, and, pleased with the friendly reception they usually met with from him in his house. I have frequently seen him at the temple ; some of my friends were intimately acquainted with him, and I know others of his associates who are of the most respectable characters : on the contrary, if ,the Duke of Vendome had lived to a greater age, and had peace been made, his talents, or rather his good fortune in war, would have become useless to the state; his debauched and disgusting manner of living, would at length have rendered him contemptible in the eyes of every honest man ; and as great as he was by birth and military renown, nobody would have associated with him. The grand Prior served in Candia against the Turks, with his uncle the Duke of Beaufort, so much known at the time of the Fronde, and who terminated by that expedition his tempestuous life. It was a fine apprenticeship for a knight of Malta. This campaign saved him one caravan: he was still young when he made it, but seventeen years of age ; and soon after his return to France, he followed Lewis XIV. to the conquest of Holland; and distinguished himself at the passage of the Rhine, and in the campaigns of the two following wars, One of which was terminated by the peace of Nimeguen, and, the other by that of Ryswick. He was wounded at the battle of Marseilles, and made Lieutenant General in 1693. He served with his brother, and sometimes under him, but never after the year 1705. He shewed the same bravery as his elder brother, the same military talents ; perhaps they were greater, because [121] he was less opinionated and indolent. He was not, commander in chief; consequently the successes of his brother did not contribute to his reputation : but who knows what part he had in these, and that is his advice had been followed, the Duke of Vendome would not have gained more honour ? The libertinism of the grand Prior, was not less excessive than that of the Duke, although it was, in certain respects, more decent. His pleasures kept him from his duty, and from being at the battle of Cassano

in 1705. He was disgraced on account of his neglect ; after which he retired to Rome, and spent some years in travelling in Italy. The king was determined to deprive him of his benefices, but he resigned them to save appearances, and a petition was granted him. Having unhappily been made prisoner by the Imperialists, in crossing the country of the Grisons, he could not return to France before 1712, the same year in which his brother died in Spain. It is possible that the fault he had committed six or seven years before might have spared him a great deal of mortification and embarrassment; at least he was not a witness to the campaign of 1708, wherein his brother behaved so ill, nor to his miserable death at Vinaros. He survived him sixteen years, and was the last of the house of Vendome ; but he had received the order of Malta. His brother married a Princess of Conde; but not being dazzled with the honour of this alliance, he took no means to give nephews to the great Conde, nor to perpetuate the illegitimate race of Henry IV. The grand Prior, for his part, thought of nothing but enjoying, like a true epicurean, the encrease of his fortune. Nevertheless he made in 1715, once more, a truce with his pleasures, to fly to succour Malta, which was threatened with [122] an invasion by the Turks ; he was declared Generalissimo of the forces of his order. This is the only time he had such a title, and that he was commander in chief. Malta was not besieged, and the grand Prior returned to his delicious retreat of the temple, where he died in 1717. He had, like his brother, good natural sense, and few advantages of education ; but he made a better use of his wit than the Duke did, and sometimes challenged in verse, the Abbe de Chaulieu and the Marquis de la Fare. I never knew the latter, who died in 1712 ; but I have sometimes conversed with the Abbe de Chaulieu, who died in the year 1720, eighty-seven years of age. I saw him at the court of the Duchess of Maine, where he was in love with Mademoiselle Launay, her femme de chambre, at present her companion, under the name of Baroness of Staal, she died in 1750. The Abbe de Chaulieu was deeply smitten with her, although blind; and certainly Madame de Staal was very well calculated to inspire such a passion, for she was neither handsome, nor desirable, but was well recompensed by her wit and understanding. Voltaire,

whom we formerly called Arouet, was of the grand Prior of Vendome's society ; and from that time, I always heard him call this prince his song-making highness, with the same tone of ease he always assumed with men of rank.

The grand Prior was for a long time in love with Mademoiselle Rochois, a famous actress at the Opera; and this passion did him honour, compared with that kind of debauch adopted by his brother. He appeared decent also, if opposed to the Duke ; yet there was a good deal of negligence in his dress, especially in the decline of his life. He took a great deal of Spanish snuff, and had the best it was possible to procure : his [123] only snuff box was a pocket lined with leather, declined to that use, into which he put his hand, and besmeared his nose with the snuff he took out. A great quantity fell upon his cloaths, with which they were always disgustingly covered; it is said, that his valets de chambre made great profits by scraping off this snuff, putting it into leaden boxes, and selling it as newly arrived from Spain.

ESSAY XXXI.

Memoir of the Marquis Belle-Isle.

We have at present in France, a man advancing rapidly towards a most brilliant fortune, who, on beginning the world had every thing against him, but whose happy stars have surmounted all obstacles. The ostentatious device, which his grandfather, M. Fouquet, took, may be applied to him; a squirrel climbing a globe with these latin words : Quo non ascen let ? Whither will he not climb ? The superintendant soon saw his pretensions vanish : the successes this man appears to be more certain ; no body can be more attentive and industrious than he is in every thing he undertakes. His conduct will be better appreciated, or rather the favours of his protecting Deity, when it is known from whence he is originated. His father was second son to the Superintendant , and born after the

disgrace of this minister. The hatred with which Colbert had inspired Lewis XIV. against the name of Fouquet, prevented the Marquis [124] of Belle-Isle from becoming any thing. Yet he found means to marry a woman of fashion, who, in truth, was without fortune : she was of the house of Levis, sister to the Duke of that name. Her family was displeased with her on account of her marriage, and was a long time without seeing her ; the new married couple went to live with the bishop of Agde, younger brother to the Superintendant in disgrace. This prelate was a great resource to his family.

It was in this kind of retreat that the present Marquis of Belle-Isle, his brother, called the Chevalier, and several sisters were born. At the death of the bishop of Agde, it was necessary for Monsieur and Madame de Belle-Isle to return to Paris, to the good Madame Fouquet, widow of the Superintendant, whose charity was so universal, that she was looked on as a saint. She died and left Monsieur and Madame de Belle-Isle in very narrow circumstances. The Island of Belle-Isle, from whence the Marquis took his name, was very poor land; produced but a small revenue, and even that may be said to be sequestered in the hands of the king, who had a garrison there.--However the present Marquis has found means to reap great advantages from his possession, or rather from his pretensions to that island. He was at first destined to the profession of arms, but certainly he could not begin that career with the same advantages as men of quality do : however he found resources, in the name of his mother, and in the creditor his maternal relations. —He obtained a regiment of dragoons, served in the army of Flanders, and was in Lisle when it was besieged by the enemies, and defended by the Marshal de Boufflers. He attached himself to this general, and was fortunate [125] enough to please him. He soon became necessary to him, and having been wounded, the marshal obtained for him the rank of brigadier, in preference to others who applied for it, among whom was the Marquis of Maillebois, son to M. de Desmarets, comptroller general of the finances, and nephew to Colbert. This was the first victory which the family of Fouquet obtained over that of Colbert, after the

disgrace of the Superintendant. At length, being continually protected by the Marshal de Boufflers, he was promoted even before the death of Lewis XIV. to the place of Mestre de Comp, general of dragoons, which was the object of ambition in some of the first men of the court. After the death of the king, M. de Belle-Isle conducted himself, during the whole course of the regency, with inconceivable propriety and address, never losing sight, for an instant of the object of his ambition and fortune. He was well with every body in the time of trouble and faction, and made himself useful to all parties. I have seen him make his court to my father, and gain his good graces. He was not deceived by the system of Mr. Law ; nor did he embark in it like many others who hoped, at first, to draw therefrom immense riches, but who were in, the end ruined. After the overthrow of this adventurer and his system, M. de Belle-Isle reaped the fruit of his prudence.

During the little Spanish war of 1719, he shewed great zeal for the regent, against a king who was grandson to Lewis XIV. and his zeal made him Marechal de Camp, and Governor of Hunninguen. He contributed to determine the regent to give the title of first minister to the Cardinal Dubois ; but death deprived him of this personage, [126] who was otherwise incapable of the least gratitude for his good services. M. le Blanc was secretary at war, without support or counsel ; M. de Belle Isle made himself master of his mind and his department ; the death of the Duke of Orleans, at length, checked his career. The Duke of Bourbon, took upon himself the premiership, without M. de Belle-Isle's being able to seize the moment and means to prevent him. M. le Blanc was arrested ; government was determined to prosecute him ; M. de Belle-Isle was himself confined to the Bastille. He was exiled the year following, and persecuted during the whole administration of the Duke, by persons whole best friend he is at present. At length the Duke was displaced, and the enemies of M. de Belle-Isle imprisoned and exiled in their turn. The Cardinal Fleury came into place ; he had been the intimate friend of the Duchess of Levis, aunt to M. de Belle-Isle, who made use of this old connexion to gain the confidence of the new first minister. He succeeded in his

attempt : M. le Blanc was restored to his place, and M. de Belle-Isle continued to enjoy the greatest credit until the death of the Secretary of state. He saw that it was impossible to have the same influence under his successor, and that, on this account, the best thing he could do would be to serve in the war. He was made Lieutenant General, and commander of Metz and the Eveches, or bishopricks : he made a great display of the advantageous arrangements undertaken for the state in his new command. At the beginning of the war, he possessed himself of Treves, which is an open city. He spoke in great terms on the utility of this conquest : that of Philipsburgh was not due to him, although he served well at the siege. He was created Chevalier des ordres du Roi [127] in 1735, and from that moment the cardinal took his advice upon the conclusion of the peace.—This old man thought perhaps, that he was obliged to him for having acquired Lorraine, because M. de Belle-Isle insisted upon the importance of this acquisition proposed by others. May it please heaven, that after having applauded a good resolution, he may not hereafter make him take a worse ! However this may be, there is every appearance that the fortune of M. de Belle-Isle will not remain in its present situation. Although he has scarcely done any thing but intrigue, he is thought very capable of being a great general and a great minister : it will be necessary to examine this matter.

He is tall and thin ; his constitution has always appeared to be delicate, his stomach weak, his heart affected, since the wound he received at the siege of Lisle. He appears obliged to be exceeding careful of his health, which he really is, to as great a degree as is possible ; but as soon as he feels himself animated by the desire of acquiring glory, and of insuring success to a plan of ambition or intrigue, the activity of his mind gives him strength which the weakness of his body refuses : he is continually at business, sleeps but little, and tires the most indefatigable of his secretaries, dictating to several at a time.—In a word, he is like fire, he devours every thing and resists every thing; he carries on several intrigues at the same time, never loses sight of one of his threads, and takes care that they do not cross each other. In an age where strict probity, real merit, and wise

and solid views are not the best recommendations, a man who knows how to use at once docility and assurance, cannot fail of succeeding. A proof that his ideas are neither enlightened [128] nor really great is, that his file is weak and unanimated, that he neither writes correctly nor forcibly, and has no eloquence even in speaking ; but he always appears to be certain of success, he never hesitates in giving assurances of it ; and he persuades the more on account of its being believed that he uses no art in doing it. He makes that which he has done, appear to greater advantage than that which he means to do ; those who follow his advice, if they receive benefit from it, think themselves obliged to him; if the contrary be the case, they blame themselves only. If M. de Belle-Isle should be charged with a great administration, it may be feared, that his excessive love of detail, and of every kind of project, will induce him to adopt many plans which he will not be able to execute fully ; and that he will never have time enough to make a reform. He will certainly be fond of adventurers, being a little so himself; and will never distinguish those who might be really useful to him.

M. de Belle-Isle married, in 1729, a lady of the house of Bethune, well made, beautiful enough, and such a one as is necessary for a man like him ; she was sometimes a coquette, with a great deal of art, address, and decency ; at others a devotee, always cajoling without meanness, and sensible without pretension : her husband, who knows equally her virtues and defects, shews a great attachment to her ; and effectively, having no other passion than ambition, he has no other mistress than his wife who seconds his views. The coquetry of the wife, and the ambition of the husband equally succeed, because they flow from their natural source, and cost nothing to those who employ them.

[129] The Chevalier de Belle-Isle, brother to the count, has, according to people who have been a good deal in the company of them both, more solid and extensive views in his plans than his brother; but he has less complaisance, is less docile, and possesses fewer means of pleasing : he has

perhaps more knowledge of the art of war, of policy and administration, but he does not know so well how to enhance the value of his thoughts and actions. Ambition is common to them both, and the chevalier is modest enough to appropriate to himself, no more of the honour of great successes, than what belongs to a younger brother ; but it is supposed, that being always hid behind his brother, he is of great use to him, and that he will severely feel his loss, if he should die before him. The chevalier writes the memoirs of the count, rectifies his plans, and presides over his domestic affairs ; they enjoy in their family affairs, every thing in common. The chevalier having better health than his brother, gives himself up more to pleasure ; but he does not on this account lose sight, for a moment, of their common ambition and political intrigues.

The best thing which the two brothers have done, is the exchange of the miserable Island of Belle-Isle, for the Comte of Gisors, that of Vernon, and the forest of Lyons and Audelis. M. de Belle-Isle has a son, born in 1732 ; if he lives he will be as great a man as his father and grandfather would have been if M. Fouquet had died in place, with as much power as Cardinal Mazarine had.

[130] ESSAY XXXII.

Respective Excellencies of Genius and Judgment in Business.

Vivacity of thought is vulgarly called wit. It is but too frequently judged that men of dull, and rather heavy sense, and who have not a brilliant and easy flow of words are fools; this is certainly a mistaken notion. To be a manor wit, is to have just ideas, and sooner or later, to apply them rationally. To be a fool, is to be incapable of judging; the inconsiderate judge precipitately, and are deceived for wanton reflexion and attention.

Setting out from these destinations, the perception of a man of great sense is equally quick and just. A man of genius has something more ; he rises above that which is submitted to the ordinary judgment of men; he is full of imagination, has great foresight, is inventive without exceeding probability, because he never departs from a certain basis, which basis is sentiment and reason. None but fools soar imprudently, and at the risk of every thing. A man of genius seizes immediately an idea, and carries it as far as possible. A man of good sense takes his resolution after serious reflection; but nothing is worse than to be incessantly undetermined.

In the course of ordinary affairs, there is a certain slowness of decision the use of which is [131] admirable, because it seems to put men who are not above mediocrity, upon a level with those of the greatest abilities. I have seen administrators and ministers who had this kind of merit only, succeed perfectly, and for a considerable length of time. But is they had great and unforeseen difficulties to encounter, they would not perhaps have acquitted themselves much to their honour. These men ought, on entering into place, to instil into themselves well approved principles; and after having consulted persons capable of furnishing them with such, to abide by, and firmly to look upon them as their coin pass; yet some exceptions must necessarily be made, for there is no general rule without them. A man of an enlightened mind, sees immediately where they lie; but however great his sense and genius may be, he can never dispense with fundamental principles.

The best, in matters of administration, are those which have been adopted in councils, and made use of for a length of time; because they are the fruit of the reflections and experience of a great number of people; and that personal interests and considerations have less influence therein, than in those which have been formed by an individual.

But every man, in whatever place he may be, ought to lay down certain rules for his private conduct ; with respect to these, they should be reflected upon in retirement, and perhaps the best way is not to consult any body about them.

It is not only necessary to deviate at certain times from the best principles, but in the end they must be abandoned, or at least modified. [132] Many things become worse by use, but those who manage prudently throw nothing away, without being first assured, that no farther use can be made of it.

It will not be difficult for me to give examples of the different kinds of abilities, I have just been speaking of, and of ministers in whom I have observed them ; I will do this presently. In the mean time, let us reason a little upon the manner by which men in place ought to act, so as to be equal to the numerous objects committed to their care, in a kingdom so extensive as that of France.

When men have occupations of too uniform and monotonous a kind, relaxation is absolutely necessary, is not by real amusements, at least by varying their employment: magistrates apply themselves at intervals, especially in their vacations, to literature, or to their domestic affairs; ministers who have, business every day in the year, but of different kinds, relax their minds by passing from one thing to another. A detail which would be fatiguing of itself, is enlivened by another with which it is connected. It is said that Cardinal Richelieu applied to business no more than six hours a day; the rest of his time was taken up by giving audiences which were not all equally serious and tiresome ; by intrigues, and finally by pleasures, for the great Cardinal partook of them. I imagine, that in dependently of Marion de Lorine, and the Abbe de Bois Robert, the composition of his theatrical pieces, and his rivalry with Corneille, were real amusements to him: how could he have looked upon them otherwise ?

The learned Abbe de Longuerue, with whom I have been a good deal acquainted, amused himself in the middle of his library, without deviating from his search after knowledge. He has [133] frequently told me, that he took up one book after another, and varied his studies; that it was in this manner, having a strong memory and great facility in reducing to order what he read, he had learned a great deal without fatiguing himself. This facility becomes habitual; we perceive that we are insensibly become more learned than others. We gain a kind of confidence in our own knowledge, which leads to pronounce upon every thing which presents itself ; and when this decisive manner is not carried to impertinence and pedantry, others accustom themselves to believe you, acknowledge your superiority, and leave you to engross the whole conversation. We allow men their erudition, when they are not overbearing ; and their extensive knowledge when they attribute it to memory only, and not to a superiority of understanding : but a man of projects, who displays them, and says publicly, that they are superior to all that have ever been invented, and who will take to himself the honour of the greatest discoveries, is commonly looked upon as a quack, who wishes to sell his drugs; but no purchasers are found; for men would fear being poisoned is they tasted them.

Minute exactitude and punctuality are virtues of the second order; but it becomes modest people to observe them. There are even cases, from which if we deviate, we should appear to insult those who are dependent upon us. It seems that we are laying snares, by requiring them to observe rules which we do not ourselves follow. We bring upon us their hatred, and perhaps make them doubt of our capacity ; for people who have no other merit than that of industry, think it a very great one. Without having so great an opinion of exactitude, let us at least believe that it has its value. Lewis XIV. did [134] not disdain to be punctual ; he never failed a minute in his appointments ; and as great as he was, it was perhaps this personal exactitude which

gave him a right to take notice of the least want of it in people about him, and to reproach them with it.

I have frequently heard it said, that we ought not to suffer others to do that which we can do ourselves; for my part, I am of a contrary opinion, and maintain it. We ought to save ourselves the trouble of doing that which may be done by others, but although it be not necessary to do every thing, nothing ought to be disdained. To be attentive to every thing which is done in our name, to adopt certain principles; to give them to those whom we employ ; to take care that they never deviate from them, to be sure of what they do; finally, to know how to gain proper assistance, this is what distinguishes the statesman, the man capable of conducting great affairs. To know how to govern secondary causes, and not to be governed by them, is a sublime art. How happy should I be if I could find people who could and would think and write for me, say all that I have to say, and execute every thing I would do ! But as there are exceptions and bounds to every thing, there are certain cases wherein it is easier to do the business ourselves than by others : God forbid, that by this I should give the advice of an indolent man; my opinion is founded upon reason and experience. It is a good thing to apply habitually to business ; but it is much better to look so well into that which is done for us, as to enable, us to dispense with a part of our application; but it is necessary to have been a great deal employed, to be able to direct the operations of others.

[135] ESSAY XXXIII.

Characters of Statesmen exemplified.

There are certainly no ministers but those of great abilities, who know how to prescribe to their secretaries, what they ought to do. I knew in France an ambassador, a man of great merit, who became afterwards minister of a great department in his own country. Under the pretence

that his writing was bad, he never wrote a single letter with his own hand; he signed his name only ; but he explained his intentions so clearly to his secretaries, who were intelligent people, that they reduced them to good and clear language. He reasoned with them, told them his motives, encouraged them to make objections, and even to dispute with him, with decency and respect. When he had cleared up every thing, and thought he had convinced them, they set to work and his dispatches were admirable.

It is certain that political affairs are frequently forwarded more by conversation, than by means of correspondence. This is the great difference between ministers and men of letters. These do better in retirement and contemplation because they have to refer to books; but the others ought to live in the great world and converse with men, because they have men to govern, whilst literary men have only their [136] ideas and phrases to arrange. A minister of the first order, in a great court, should know how to hearken with patience, attention, and mildness to answer calmly, and express himself gracefully. Secretaries want, on the contrary, nothing but good sense to understand, and a good stile in their writing. This is what makes it impossible that a secretary should supply the place of an ambassador, because he cannot enjoy the same advantages at the court in which he resides; he cannot know so well the character of persons with whom he has business, without the freedom of mutual conversation.

It is a question difficult to resolve, to know is a good secretary can become a great minister. This depends to a certain degree, upon the country and circumstances ; but he would succeed with great difficulty in a monarchical state. Ministers should be acquainted with the court, and enjoy, when they go into place, some consideration; they should not be accustomed to tremble when in the presence of courtiers, and they ought to know how to avoid all their snares ; for these gentlemen wish for nothing more than to shackle ministers, sometimes by seducing them, at others by alarming their fears. Moreover, a good secretary ought to have no ideas of his own, but to know how to turn to a

good account those of the minister he is under ; the minister ought, on the contrary, to think for himself; for the advantage and interest of the sovereign and the state. A man who arrives at a great employ, without the advantages of birth, and never having filled an important station, must necessarily be embarrassed about the countenance he ought to put on ; if he be firm, he is accused of insolence, and it said to have forgot himself; if he preserves the manner of his former state, he is despised and treated as if he were still in it.

[137] On the other hand, would it be well done to fill up the places of administration with military men, and those of the first rank ? Lewis XIV. did not think so; but was of opinion, that it was his interest that the greatest of his ministers should depend upon his confidence. A much stronger reason is, that men of the first rank, and those in the army, do not often contract, when young, the habit of applying to business ; that they are ignorant of all the forms of it, and that most departments require a perfect knowledge of these. The real business of a secretary of state, being to give a regular form to all the decisions of the king and his council. Ministers ought to be brought up to administration, because they are nothing more in reality, than the administrators of affairs. The details confided to their care, are lately become immense ; nothing is done without them, or by any body else. It is to be wished that their knowledge were as great as their power; if it be not, they are obliged to leave every thing to their clerks, who become masters of affairs, and consequently of the state. It is by a knowledge of forms, that subalterns are arrived at governing their principals, and, to make use of a vulgar expression, that journeymen are become masters.

I will give my opinion freely upon ministers, whom I have seen for the last thirty years at the head of affairs in France, and of some others more ancient whom I have not personally known, but upon whose characters, &c. I have had memoirs sufficient to enable me to speak decidedly about them.

The Chancellor le Teller, father of M. de Louvois, died some years before I was born, which was in the year 1693 ; M. Boucherat was elevated to that great dignity, which would have been much above his capacity, if the times had been [138] more difficult : but the power of Lewis XI V. was so well established, the parliaments were so submissive, the right of remonstrating had been so restrained, or rather taken away from the superior courts, that there was no danger in giving the place to a magistrate, almost become the oldest member of the council ; in confiding to him no other cares than those of filling-up the offices of magistracy, which venality and right of inheritance facilitated the means of doing ; of sealing edicts and declarations, and creating imposts and new offices, such as ministers thought proper to expedite. Therefore M. Boucherat held his place very peaceably until the year 1694, when he died at eighty-four years of age. He left daughters only; his successor was M. de Pontchartrain, who was afterwards in 1689, comptroller general of the finances, and in 1690, marine secretary of state, and of the department of Paris. It was he who, in 1687, persuaded my father to charge himself with the care of the police of the capital. M. de Pontchartrain took the chancellorship as a retreat ; in fact it might be looked upon as such at this time, when every thing was in such a state of submission. He was very happy to find the king disposed to make M. de Chamillart his successor in the comptrollership, and M. de Pontchartrain his son, in his other departments. Neither one nor the other was worthy of succeeding him; but at length they eased him of the most important cares, and fatiguing details. It was however necessary that he should give advice to his son, in whom he had not all the satisfaction he had hoped for, which determined him to retire in the year 1714, from all public affairs. Lewis XIV. was become old, and ready to sink into the grave ; M. de Pontchartrain was exactly [139]of the same age. Moreover, he wished prudently to avoid being obliged to carry into parliament, an edict which declared the legitimate princes capable of succeeding to the crown. M. Voisin was charged with this commission, which was executed with all the submission generally shewn to the

orders of Lewis XIV. even to the death of this monarch, which happened in the month of September, 1715.—M. Voisin, about as good a chancellor as M. Boucherat, died very it a-propos , in the month of February, 1717, and was replaced by M. d'Aguesseau. I will speak of this gentleman in his turn, as well as of the other ministers of the present reign ; in the mean time, I must again observe, that of the three last chancellors of Lewis XIV. M. de Pontchartrain was certainly the most able. He had been a long time counsellor of the parliament of Paris; abandoned by his relations the Phillippeaux de la Vrilliere, a branch of which vegetated in the place of secretary of state ; and was nevertheless of the Phillippeaux of Pontchartrain, who were descended from the first who had held that employ by means of Mary of Medicis. M. de Porchartrain was afterwards for twenty years, first president of the parliament of Bretagne : he not only made himself esteemed in that province, by his equity and knowledge, but he gave proofs of firmness, ability and address in managing the Bretons, who have ever been very difficult to govern, It may easily be judged, that he had other affairs, when he was minister of the finances. But they ceased to give him trouble the moment he became nothing more than a minister of justice. The chancellorship was very easy in his time ; the chief magistrate being too much taken up with passing edicts of finance, and creating offices, had no time to make wise regulations; also, if he had no trouble, he had no honour.

[140] Let us now consider the administration of finances under the late king. The great Colbert died in 1683 ; he was succeeded by M. Pelletier, a very worthy man, and who had behaved perfectly well in every department he had filled ; but he was not fit for that of the finances, especially in time of war, which happened as soon as he went into office. Supplies were difficult to obtain, and consequently burthensome ; M. Pelletier made use of such as occurred to him, which he distributed with all imaginable justice and equity ; but he could not prevent the imposts he had laid on from doing a real injury to the state. He had no opportunity of making useful arrangements, after having been obliged to employ the

most pernicious means. The Chancellor Le Tellier, who was alive when M. Pelletier went into administration, was right in saying to Lewis XIV. that the new comptroller, although an honest man, and had great application, was unfit for the finances: he gave a bad reason for this, by adding, that he was of too mild a disposition. His Majesty replied, that it was precisely on that account he had made choice of him : this was a fine and noble sentiment ; but the king and the chancellor were equally deceived in their opinion of the defects of M. Pelletier.— This appeared clearly, upon his being succeeded, in 1690, by M. de Pontchartrain, who was not over mild, although equally equitable in the use of means to which he was obliged to have recourse, undoubtedly with regret; and which were the more cruel, by reason of his being obliged to encrease them very considerably: the people cried out, but they submitted, for the king's authority was uniformly and generally established. M. de Pontchartrain was fortunate enough to get rid of the finances in 1690, and they were given to M. [141] de Chamillart, of whom the king was very fond, which indeed he merited in some degree. This minister, without being either weak or quite incapable of business, was not equal to his place : but who would have been equal to it in such unhappy times? What could a comptroller do but repeat and augment the burthens, and double burthens of the people: this is what M. de Chamillart did ; he sunk under the weight of affairs, retired from the ministry in 1708, and died in 1721. M. Desmarets, nephew to M. Colbert, took his place ; the choice of this gentleman was perhaps the best that could be made : but did M. Colbert himself get well over it in 1708, 1709, and some of the following years ? No. It is only necessary to read the memoir which M. Desmarets presented to the regent, to become acquainted with all the difficulties he had to encounter : this memoir is a melancholy proof of the desolating evils with which France was at that time afflicted ; it exposes the situation the kingdom was in, and no good Frenchman can refrain from weeping at the recital. M. Desmarets says therein, that the king assured him he knew the state of his finances ; that he did not expect from him impossibilities; and is he succeeded, he would do him the most important service, but if he was unfortunate in his endeavours, he should not

impute to him the least blame. Nothing could he more reasonable; for it would have been impossible to have reestablished the finances as circumstances then were. M. Desmarets did his best; he continued in place, until after the death of Lewis XIV. and died in 1721, the same year with M. de Chamillard : he left, among other evils, two many-headed monsters, [142] which it was necessary to destroy—notes of the State and notes of the Mint. We shall see what became of these in the following reign.

The administration of foreign affairs, the most important of all departments, had been entrusted in 1679, to M. Colbert of Croissy, brother to the great Colbert ; he died in 1690: his son, M. de Torcy, had the reversion of his office and department given him the year before ; but at the death of his father he was found too young to replace him, although he was thirty years of age : he was put under the direction of M. Amaud, of Pomponne, who had already filled the department from 1671, to 1679, when he was obliged to retire, although accused of nothing but negligence : he was otherwise most polite and respectable ; but like the family of the Amauds, suspected of Jansenism, which was at that time a crime at Court. M. de Pomponne, guided his son-in-law three years ; after which, the latter was in a situation to shew what he was and what he could do ; he kept his place until the death of Louis XIV. His conduct since that epocha has been that of a true philosopher, and ought to be an example to the old ministers. For my part, who am not yet become one, I mean to gather from the conversation of this respectable man, principles of conduct for the time when this shall happen, and for that, when I shall be so no longer. If ever the memoirs which he has done me the favour to communicate to me be printed, his manner of thinking, and the qualities of his mind, will be seen without disguise ; and M. de Torcy will be looked upon as a classical author, proper to instruct Ministers of foreign affairs, both for the time present and to come.—They will be taught how to act in cases of the greatest delicacy. Those which M. de Torcy had [143] to encounter were certainly very embarrassing, but in all the misfortunes which befell the

old age of Lewis XIV. his minister of finances was most to be pitied.

The war department had been given, at the death of M. de Louvois, which happened in 1691, to M. de Barbezieux, his son, who held it ten years. This secretary of state, who had good natural sense, a great aptitude to business, a quick and lively conception, and a great habitude of detail, to which he had been in the early part of his life formed by his father, had also great defects.—He had been spoiled in his youth, by every body, except his father ; he was a libertine, dissipated, and impertinent; he sometimes treated the military too lightly, who, according to their custom, spared nothing, not even meannesses, when favors were to be obtained, by them, and complained haughtily the moment nothing more was to be hoped for. He went to his offices from necessity, but was always treated with great respect, because the son of M. de Louvois, who had, as we may say, created them, could not fail of inspiring veneration, and even attachment. Lewis XIV. who knew all the defects of M. de Barbezieux, complained of them privately, and spoke to him sometimes in a sharp and particular manner; but he suffered him to remain still in place, because he saw how important it was to preserve, in his department, the system and principles of M. de Louvois. M. de Barbezieux never entered the council of state ; it is said that he burned with rage to see M. de Chamillard, whom he had often made wait in his father's and his own anti-chamber, a member of it. But, according to all appearances, the ruinous and mortal alliance which M. de Barbezieux wished to make of a life of libertinism [144] and dissipation, with the business and multiplied expeditions which the situation of France required, (Lewis XIV. having accepted the testament of Charles II. and sent the Duke of Anjou, his grandson, into Spain,) was what brought on the violent illness which carried him in a few days to the grave. M. Fagon, first physician to the king, pronounced his illness mortal, the first moment he saw him after he was attacked by it. He informed the king of it, who seemed but little affected at it. M. de Barbezieux died the 5th of January 1701, and the unhappy Chamillard was immediately charged with his department, in addition to

that of the finances. I could here make great and just reflections upon the incompatibility of these two departments. Moreover they could not be more improperly united than in the person of M. de Chamillard; but a glorious reign of sixty years had inspired Lewis XIV. with the presumption not only to believe that he knew how to choose his ministers, but that he could teach them their duty, and direct their operations : he certainly deceived himself. It depended on him alone to unite in the same person the two important employs of Colbert and Louvois, but it was not in his power to supply the want of their abilities. It is not that M. de Chamillard was a man without merit ; he gave, early in life, proofs of a rare probity, from which he never varied. But, if a want of probity renders the greatest taunts useless, and even dangerous; on the other hand, this great virtue, being alone, supplies not the want of them, nor that of knowledge. Finally, at the end of six or seven years, M. de Chamillard sunk under the weight of business, which he discharged as well as he could, but to which he was never equal. He quitted first the finances, and soon afterwards [145] the war department. Lewis XIV. incorrigible in his opinion of being more able than all his ministers, made M. Voisin his successor, who knew less of affairs than M. de Chamillard. The great proofs which this minister gave of his abilities in the war department, were not what procured him the elevated place of Chancellor, which he became possessed of in 1714 ; this was the price of his compliance with the absolute will of his master, who, far from having learned any thing from his misfortunes, consoled himself by believing he should find resources in the choice he made of his ministers. M. Voisin was, till the death of the late king, at the head of the magistracy, and of military affairs ; cares very different in their objects, which ought not to be intrusted to the same person, but whose principles are not so wide of each other as might be imagined. There are maxims common to every kind of administration ; men who are without them are incapable of any. On the other hand, there are particular ones, according to the nature of affairs and circumstances, which occur. M. de Seignelai replaced M. Colbert, his father, in the marine department only ; with the defects which sons of ministers generally have, when, they become

ministers themselves, which are self-sufficiency, presumption and levity. He had, however, certain talents, and supported the honour of the French marine, which was, in some measure, created by his father ; but he deviated from the principles upon which it had been formed: it was with a view to commerce, to make it flourish, to extend and encourage it, that M. Colbert engaged Lewis XIV. to build ships. He was controller general, and made the marine department depend upon commerce and the finances; his son, who had wit, ambition, and audacity, confined to the marine department alone, looked upon it in [146] quite another point of view : the finances were in other hands ; he saw how desirous Lewis XIV. was of conquests, and of ruling in Europe. It was by taking advantage of these dispositions, in the king, that M. Louvois gained the confidence of the monarch; M. de Siegnelai wished to rival the minister of the war department ; he undertook to make the arms of France as powerful by sea as they were by land ; he bombarded Genoa, crushed the Algerines, had ambassadors from Siam brought to France, in the king's vessels, and led them about Versailles. The year following he cannonaded Tunis and Tripoly, and gave brilliant entertainments to the king, in his castle of Sceaux ; finally, he attacked the Dutch by sea, and undertook to re-establish James II. upon the throne of England, from which the Prince of Orange, his son-in-law, had driven him. In 1690, the last year of his life, he saw the king's fleet gain two battles in the channel. At length he died, and, after his death, Lewis XIV. re-united once more, and very properly, the administration of the marine to the finances ; but M. de Pontchartrain was much embarrassed in finding resources in one to support the other.

This gentleman became chancellor, and left the marine department to his son, whom he had married to Mademoiselle de la Roche, Foucaud de Roye, who died, leaving him an only son, the present Count of Maurepas. I dare not give the portrait of M. de Pontchartrain, junior ; this I leave to others, who had business with him during his administration, and are still of his acquaintance.*[* He was alive in 1736, the time when these Essays were written.

He died the year following.] I have been assured that he has pointed [147] out the danger of inheritance in places of confidence and administration; and that the public, far from regretting his going out of office, thought themselves happy on getting clear of him, at the death of the king. Little need be said upon the department and history of Messieurs de Philippeaux de la Vrilliere, de Chateau Neuf, and of Saint Florentin : these were the surnames of the sons of that family of secretaries of state, which may be traced back to the first race of our kings. It is to be believed that Paul Philippeaux de Pontchartrain had merit, or understood, at least, political intrigue ; since after being twelve or sixteen years clerk to M. de Rovol and M. de Villeroy, he was made, in 1600, secretary to Mary of Medicis, in her coactive power. This queen had confidence enough in him to make him secretary of state, as soon as she became regent. He died in 1621 ; his eldest son, who was counsellor in the parliament, son-in-law to the famous Advocate General Ta'on, did not succeed him ; his place went to his younger brother, Raymond Philippeaux de Herbaut, who was at first secretary to the privy-council, afterwards treasurer of the casual revenues, and at length of the savings. He died in 1629, and his office remained to the younger branch in prejudice of the elder, which did not return to it until eighty years afterwards. M. d' Herbaut was replaced by Lewis Philippeaux d' la Vrilliere, who was sixty-two years secretary of state under the reigns of Lewis XIII. and XIV. ; but he made so little stir at court and in the state, that we should not know he ever existed, were it not for the great number of edits, declarations and letters patent he signed, and did not his name appear on the list of secretaries of state. He inherited [148] the fortune of the famous Particelly d'Emery, his father-in-law, who, after having been the most terrible partizan, and cruel extortioner under the reign of Lewis XIII. became in the administration of Mazarine, superintendant of the finances. Baltazar Philippeaux, who was counsellor, clerk of the parliament, left the church to succeed his father, and died in 1700 ; he was called M. de Chateau Neuf. His son took again the name of la Vrilliere, and it was this gentleman who signed, perhaps, the most despatches ; for, at the beginning of the regency, the Duke of Orleans, wishing to discharge all the secretaries of

Lewis XIV. kept M. de la Vrilliere only, because he appeared to him a man of little consideration. The administration of affairs in general was given to different councils, but every thing necessary to be signed by order came under his pen ; he died in 1725. His son, the Count of Saint Florentin replaced him ; but his department has been put upon the same footing as that of his father, under Lewis XIV. The list of affairs entrusted to him appears of considerable length in the Royal Calendar ; in reality nothing of importance devolves upon him ; he signs and dispatches, as did his father and grandfather.

[149] ESSAY XXXIV.

The Administration of the Regent Duty Exemplified.

If I were not sure of writing for myself only, I should tremble at giving my opinion of the minister's of the present reign. Some of them are yet alive, and others belong to families now in favour : on the other hand, if I write not at present what I have seen and known, important and instructive truths will, perhaps, escape posterity. I will therefore explain myself with the liberty of a man who neither hopes nor fears, nor has any interest in the success or failure of any party, and who speaks to a posterity, perhaps, very remote.

The Regent had no sooner taken the reigns of government than he proposed a form of administration quite different from that of Lewis XIV. Whether it was from a spirit of innovation, which is almost inevitable at the beginning of a reign, or from a wish to avoid the reproach, cast on the late king and his ministers, of being despotic and arbitrary, he confided each part of administration to as many councils ; gave full activity to those formed in the preceding reign, for the finances, commerce, and foreign affairs, and created others for the war and marine departments ; he was even [150]desirous of establishing one for ecclesiastical affairs, but this was attended with

great difficulties. All these particular councils were without prejudice to the council general of the Regency, from which they might be looked upon as so many emanations, and that of the malecontents, which has always been directed by the chancellor. I have already said that M. Voisin filled this place at the death of Lewis XIV. that he died in 1717, and was succeeded by D.

d'Aguesseau, who is still invested with that dignity. If piety, and all the virtues which derive from it, probity, erudition, a taste for letters, and great sense, but of a different kind from that which administration requires, could make a perfect chancellor, M. d'Aguesseau would certainly be one ; but other talents are necessary to perform the duties of so important an office. The chancellor ought to unite every thing that constitutes a great magistrate, to that which makes a great minister: he has business continually with men of the law ; he is their chief, and ought to understand their language, know their forms, and possess the art of conducting courts of every kind : he is at the head, of one very difficult to govern, namely the council. On the other hand, he is the king's minister, and ought to maintain his authority, by carefully observing to conciliate as with forms, a negligence of which might make the best concerted enterprizes fail, and such as would be the most advantageous to the king and people. He ought, if it be possible, to gain the consideration and esteem of the magistracy ; but he should not be afraid of it : it is his duty to make it respectable, but not to esteem any member of it more than he merits ; not to hesitate in reforming unjust judgments, and in punishing iniquitous and partial judges ; but he should ever give his reasons publicly, and expose the faults he^[151] is obliged to repress ; he ought particularly to distinguish between those of ignorance and negligence from such as are of a more serious kind. Like all the other ministers, he should sometimes make use of the two-edged sword of royal authority ; but it behoves nobody more than himself to prove that he has constantly kept a watchful eye over it.

M. d'Aguesseau has perhaps too great a respect for the persons of Magistrates ; he always gives them an advantage over him ; and since the unhappy epocha of the

venality of offices, they are far from always meriting such attentions. The Regent made his Court to the Parliament, at a time when he thought he stood in need of his assistance, by conferring the first dignity in the kingdom upon the Attorney General ; but men of the robe are apt to receive every thing offered to them as due to their merit, and to form new pretensions to obtain still something more. They sometimes carry these to such excess, that it becomes necessary to check them, were it only for form's sake, even when they may, upon the whole, be justly founded. This is what M. d'Aguesseau was by no means fit for, and what obliged the Regent to have recourse to my father in delicate cases. Moreover, M. d'Aguesseau has another great defect, which is that of being too slow in deciding on great affairs. The functions of Advocate General, which he has performed, have accustomed him to weigh opinions, and to take his resolution with difficulty; he hesitates even afterwards concerning its rectitude, and seems to wish he could retract it : but is this were the time to correct any error, instead of doing it he would commit others. I have seen him, for the purpose of coming to a decision, call to his aid one of his children, who was young, and not capable of making his respectable father take the best resolution ; on which [152] account a lady of his acquaintance, a very sensible woman, said to him one day, " Take care, Mr. Chancellor, what you do ; you, though very learned, doubt of every thing, and your younger son doubts of nothing ; you will never do any thing well in this manner." In fact, the conscience of this great Magistrate is as delicate as his mind is timid, and he torments himself with continual scruples.

My father was of a very different character, knowing how to determine himself with promptitude, and to hold firmly to the resolution he had taken. Being charged twenty years with the Police of Paris, he was accustomed to that kind of detail, to that sagacity which enabled him to find in an instant the point of difficulty, and the means of resolving it. He was intelligent ; had a long and perfect knowledge of forms, and knew how to apply them to circumstances, even those of necessity, with the greatest advantage. He knew

the Parliament, as our great Generals know those with whom they have a long time been at war, as the Duke of Vendone might know the Prince Eugene, and the Marshal Villars, Marlborough. He did not personally hate this body, he even respected it, and was allied to the most considerable members of it, by his wife, who was of the family of Caumartin, and by his grandmother, niece to the Chancellor de Chiverny. He owed his robe to these alliances. The functions of lieutenant of the police are a mixture of civil-magistracy and political administration ; to fill this place it is necessary to unite all the abilities of a great politician, and I can assert, without prejudice, that my father had them all. Moreover he knew the court, and how to manage men of rank, without offending or fearing them : to this effect he tired the advantages of his birth, and made a merit of his modesty ; whilst presidential haughtiness obscured those who [153] bore a distinguished and illustrious name in our history. He was amiable in society, and the moment after his contracted brow and black wig had made the populace tremble, the agreeableness of his conversation, and easy good breeding, proved he was fit to keep the best company. People were persuaded that the art of spying, which he carried to the last degree of perfection, put him in possession of the secrets of every family; but he made use of his information with so much discretion, that he never disturbed the repose of any body, and preserved every mystery in his own bosom, never proceeding unreasonably, and always for the welfare of the state, and that of individuals. I am obliged to acknowledge that his private morals were not perfectly pure. I knew him too well to suspect him of being a devotee, but he made religion and decency respectable, and set the example whilst he was prescribing laws to enforce the observation of them. Such a man was necessary to the Regent, to make up for the weakness of M. d'Aguesseau, at a time when government was obliged to keep the parliament in awe. He was keeper of the seals in 1718, and the records of justice for that year contain remarkable, and I will dare to add, precious proofs of my father's sense, abilities, and firmness of mind.

As long as he thought the system of M. Law necessary for

the good and interest of the state, he established and maintained the credit of the bank ; he discharged, in this manner, the immense debts of the crown, and enriched it with real treasures, either in specie or credit, which is the same thing, provided the latter be generally adopted ; for after all, even riches are matters of opinion. My father employed, like a good citizen, all the resources which his intelligence and character acquired [154] him, to procure honour to the Regent and advantage to the state. But, when he was fully convinced that the abuse of bank notes was carried to an extreme, and it would be betraying the nation to give them an unjust and forced credit, he resigned the places which put him at the head of these operations. His retreat finally discovered the illusion ; but the mischief was over, and irreparable, before he retired. The Regent never withdrew from him either his kindness or confidence. He lived upwards of a year after his retreat, and did not die of vexation ; he had too great a soul to sink under its weight. He was by no means accustomed to the management of the finances ; but a statesman seizes all the objects of administration in general—knows how to procure assistance from the details he does not perfectly understand—and to command that to be done which he either cannot or will not execute himself.

My father died in 1721. M. d'Aguesseau, who was recalled in 1720, was sent in 1722 to Fresne, and the seals were given to M. Fleuriau d'Armenonville, one of those chancellors whose merit consisted in their pliancy in receiving the impressions of the prime minister, and of putting the great seal and most respectable marks of sovereign authority, to resolutions in which they had themselves no share. After the disgrace of M. le Duc, the administration of royal justice was put into the hands of two men, equally intelligent and equitable, although of very different characters. M. d'Aguesseau found himself again at the head of the council, and M. Chavelin had the seals.

[155] The chancellorship was not, like every other department, subservient to the council ; but the finances

were not exempt from it. M. Demarets was entirely discharged; there was no longer a controller-general ; none but the Regent gave orders, as the king had formerly done. M. le Marechal de Villeroy was named chief of the council of finances, but purely honorary, and the Duke of Noailles president; although the Duke had considerable wit, and as much knowledge as could be expected from a young man of the court, he could not, certainly, conduct this important administration, nor understand any thing of the details in which it was necessary he should take the greatest part; he had in his character an indecision, from a perpetual hesitation, which must frequently have prevented him from acting well. —I do not believe what I have heard of the defects of his heart ; perhaps those who have spoken to me of them were prejudiced against his person ; it is, however, certain that, with great sense and abilities, he could not manage the finances. The Marquis d'Effiat, first equerry to the Duke of Orleans, was vice-president of the council, and still less capable of business than the president ; he did not, however, like the latter, turn the heads of his secretaries. These gentlemen had under them nine counsellors of state, to whom different parts of the administration were distributed ; some were capable of the details entrusted to their care, others were not ; but, if even they all had the same capacity and merit, a necessary union would not have reigned amongst them, because no one depended upon another ; and, consequently, the council did not act upon constant and uniform principles. I cannot too often repeat, upon this occasion, however useful councils are, when well directed, and although [156] after having been consulted upon general arrangements, sage, meditated, and wise laws, have resulted from their advice, they are equally dangerous, when, instead of leaving them the care of watching over authority, it is wholly abandoned to their discretion, they then degenerate into mere bear-garden meetings; they quarrel, dispute, no one understands what he is about ; and hence nothing results but anarchy and confusion. If arbitrary and absolute authority degenerate into despotism, councils to which nothing is presented in a prepared state, and wherein their decisions are not regulated, do still more harm to public welfare. When the abuses of the councils established by the Duke of Orleans

were perceived, and it appeared necessary to abrogate them, they were given a kind of extreme unction, by charging the Abbe de Saint Pierre, who at first approved of them, to make the apology. He acquitted himself of this, by composing, a work, intituled, *La Polysnodie*, or *L'Avantage de la Pluralite des Conseils*; to which he added the following epigraph, taken from the Proverbs of Solomon : *Ubi multa consilia, salus*. He was right to a certain degree, but he was obliged to acknowledge it to be equally necessary that somebody should be charged to prepare questions before they were submitted to councils, and that authority ought to decide when they have been maturely discussed.

To return to the council of finance in particular, some changes were made in 1717, in the members of which it was composed, but no advantage derived from them. In 1718, my father was made president in the place of M. de Noailles ; this gentleman had not perceived of what utility the system of M. Law, well regulated and understood, might be, in liberating the state from its debts, and in re-establishing, at the same time, [157] the finances and commerce. My father seized this idea, but he comprehended that it was necessary to direct and put bounds to its effects and consequences; he gave to this object all possible attention ; he employed his firmness to overcome the obstacles which those who were not persuaded of the utility of the new system, opposed to its establishment : but alas ! it was not long before he was obliged to use the same means to colour and hide the abuses committed by the Regent, in the use he made of these resources, which are truly delicate in their application.

The Duke of Orleans had knowledge, sagacity, and even vigour enough to conceive the merit of a great plan, and to identify his fame with the welfare of the kingdom he had to govern ; but strong passions, and a kind of weakness into which they betray men of the most enlightened understandings, carried him beyond the bounds he ought to have prescribed himself : they transformed into a poison

what should have been a remedy ; my father saw this, explained and repeated it—not to the public, from which a wise minister always conceals the evil he foresees, but to him who was matter to the Regent—to him only who could prevent or repair it ; useless efforts ! the bank lost its credit. My father saw it was impossible to retrieve it ; at length he abandoned, if I may be allowed the expression, the state to its unhappy state, contented with not having made a fortune in a critical time, during which so many others had unjustly enriched, or imprudently ruined themselves. The 5th of January, 1720, M. Law was named controller-general, and before the end of the year he was obliged to fly precipitately, and quit the kingdom.

M. Pelletier de la Houssaye, chancellor to the Duke of Orleans, was appointed controller-general [158] in his place; but he held his employ little more than a year. In the month of August, 1722, he was replaced by M. Dodun, who kept his post till the year 1726, when the Duke was exiled.—These two controllers-general were but of a middling capacity : it was under the first of them that the good operation of the Visa was begun, of which M. le Pelletier, member of the council of finance in the time of the Regency, and controller-general after M. Dodun, was the real author.—He proposed to examine the original of all the notes and debts, at the charge of the state, to pay attention to those whole object should appear perfectly legal, in order to discharge them, but to annul such as should appear conspicuously usurious or excessive. This plan was good in itself, and it were to be wished it had been carried into execution with a scrupulous exactitude ; but the least abuse, or suspicion of injustice, spoiled the whole. The system of M. Law appeared preferable, on account of its being more expeditious, and as easy to keep within proper bounds : it was so in fact, but, as I have just observed, it was abused ; and it was not till after it had been renounced, that the idea of the Visa was again taken up, when it was still more difficult of execution than at first ; it therefore became the source of great abuse and injustice.

M. le Pelletier was no more to be blamed for the present bad proceedings, than my father had been for all the evil which happened towards the end of M. Law's system ; but there was this great difference between them, M. d'Argenson did not abandon the administration of finances until he saw they were ruined in spite of him, and M. le Pelletier took the title of Controller-general after [159] every thing was lost by the Visa. It is, however, ' important, to remark that the finances of France were soon reestablished, notwithstanding the catastrophes of the bank and the Visa ; so true it is that in matters of finance, public credit and circulation find their own level, like the water of the sea, after storms and tempests. There are but some particular fortunes which are lost without resource ; a melancholy and fatal truth for many people in certain critical moments, but consolatory to the state. In 1726, M. Orry replaced M. Dodun : the apparently rough and austere character of this minister, does not prevent his being just and even economical ; he seconds, in this respect, the views of the Cardinal de Fleury, who has, moreover, the prudence and address to make what is most agreeable in the administration of finances fall to his share.

The minister of foreign affairs was at the death of Lewis XIV. subject to a council as badly composed as that of the finances. The Marshal d'Uxelles was president, and had neither a profound knowledge of affairs of this kind, nor real talents for administration ; all his policy was that of a courtier, and although marshal of France, his military talent was confined to overawing subalterns ; forcing them to discipline by great severity, and dazzling them with haughtiness and pomp. I was not much acquainted with the qualities of his heart, which have been the subject of much censure ; but I remember his figure, which was very extraordinary ; I know also that he lived in an elegant stile. His three associates in council were the Abbe Destees, the Marquis of Canillac, and the, Count of Chiverny : their heads were not much better than his own; but in other respects, the two last were [160] men of wit: Chiverny had been ambassador at the court of Vienna, and Canillac was the intimate friend of Lord Stair, ambassador from

England. The Regent wished to form connections with this power, and to change so completely the political system, relative to his particular interests, that M. de Torcy was not only useless, but prejudicial to him: therefore although the Duke of Orleans could not but esteem him, he left him in the council of the regency, and gave him the superintendence of the posts, without permitting him to enter the council of foreign affairs; yet this council had no other guide or director than Pecquet, its secretary, and who had been clerk to M. de Torcy. The foreign ministers knew not to whom they were to apply to treat upon business ; a man who was not, nor ever had been of the council, was appointed to hear them ; this was M. d'Armenonville, ordinary counsellor of state, who had been intendant of the finances, and had bought the office of secretary of state of M. de Torcy ; but upon condition not to exercise the functions. In 1718, the Abbe Dubois entered the council of foreign affairs in 1719, the offices of secretary of state having been re-established, a fifth was created for the Abbe, and to which was attached the department of foreign affairs. The council had then nothing more to do ; Dubois became the sole instrument, and the sole organ of the policy of the Regent, of his correspondence with the courts of London and Vienna, and of his Great cavils with Spain and Alberoni. It was during this administration that the treaty of the quadruple alliance, & concluded.

Dubois, who at length became cardinal, was one of those men against whom many things may, [161] in all safety of conscience be said, and to whom there is nevertheless some good to be attributed ; but we ought, however, to be careful of what we say in his favour, for fear of being thought declared partisans of a bad character. Born in the lowest order of the Bourgeoisie of Brive, in Limousin, he was first attached to the Father le Teller, confessor to the king, who gave him an opportunity of acquiring a good education ; afterwards to a vicar of Saint Eustache, whom he was fortunate enough to please, and who wishing to place in the tuition of the Duke of Chartres afterwards Duke of Orleans and Regent, a man incapable of giving him umbrage, procured this honour to Dubois. He was at

first no more than sub-preceptor under M. de Saint Laurant, to whose place he afterwards succeeded. He pleased his pupil by flattering his passions ; but the true coup de partie the Abbe Dubois made, and by which his fortune began, was his determining the Duke of Orleans to marry Mademoiselle de Blois, natural daughter to Lewis XIV. notwithstanding the great opposition and repugnance of MADAME.

In those delicate affairs, silent and obscure intrigues are the means which are most advantageously employed; it was therefore Dubois who concluded this great business. Continuing to make himself agreeable, *per fas et nefas*, to his pupil, (now become his master) and having endeavoured to inspire him with vice rather than virtue, he enjoyed the greatest credit from the beginning of the Regency; having moreover much wit and effrontery, and not being held by any consideration capable of restraining a good citizen, he put himself at the head of several intrigues, whose objet was the particular interest of the Duke of Orleans, and not conformable [162] to those of the younger king and the state. His conduct was that of base, but political spirits ; who, when they find obstacles on one side, turn to the other. He spoke naturally very well when he was not embarrassed ; but when he treated of affairs with people of whom he was not sure, he hesitated and stammered, perhaps to give himself time to think of what he ought to answer ; he was deceitful and guilty of the greatest falsehoods, but he did not spread with the same effrontery that he conceived them. Capable of the greatest atrocities, he was sometimes convicted of them ; then he trembled, blushed, and was confused; but he was always very far from changing for the better, or repenting: his manners and conversation formed a perfect contrast with his ecclesiastical habit: he swore, blasphemed, and said the most indecent things against religion : but he ought to be reproached most with having persuaded his prince, that there was not in the world either real piety or true probity,—that every thing consisted in arriving at a proposed end, by keeping secret the means made use of for that purpose. He extended the principles of this bad education to the Duchess of Berry, daughter of the Regent.

It was this man whom the Duke of Orleans made secretary of state for foreign affairs, at a time when he found himself obliged to restore to these offices their functions.

The connection of the Regent with the English, were managed by the Abbe Dubois and Canillac, with Earl Stanhope and Lord Stair; but Dubois having possessed himself of the real secret of that arrangement, was the only person who could follow it up. He was certainly a pensioner of England, that is, of the enemies of the state, and the Catholic religion; but as it was for the Regent he intrigued, he feared nothing from him. In 1720, this worthy ecclesiastic was promoted to the archbishopric [163] of Cambray, and obtained it with circumstances which, for the honour of religion, I dare not insert. In 1721, he was made cardinal, and in 1723, was declared prime minister, when the Regent was obliged to give up to the king, at least in appearance, the helm of the state. It may easily be believed that the Duke of Orleans thought of making him ostensible minister only, and of being the real one himself : yet who knows that Dubois would not have remained prime minister if the Regent had died before him ; but it happened to the contrary, and the Duke of Orleans was obliged to take this title. M. de Morville, son of M. d'Armenonville, keeper of the seals, who had the marine department, took that of foreign affairs, and kept it under the authority of the Duke of Bourbon, who had the title of prime minister after the Duke of Orleans. This prince had no merit which made him fit for this place, his sole recommendation was the greatness of his birth ; he was merely ostensible, and every body knew the agent by whom he was governed. M. de Morville was a man of but middling abilities, yet he had good sense, and a just judgment : he possessed a secondary merit, which we distinguish by the name of *bon ecouteur*, (a person who hearkens patiently to what is said to him) ; he never spoke but in his turn, nor without giving himself time to think of what he ought to say; then whatever he laid was to the point. Men went from his audiences pleased with having been attentively heard. He retired in August 1727 ; his father gave up the seals at the same time, and they were

both replaced by M. Chauvelin, in whom their titles were united. The father died the year following, the son in 1732.

The council of war, established under the regency, had for its chief the Marshal Villars, already famous for his victories gained over the enemy, [164] and who seemed to have restored the tarnished glory of the arms of France to its former lustre.--This general's defects were vanity and presumption, or at least all the appearances of them ; otherwise he had a greatness of mind, good sense, and marked talents for war. But however brilliant these advantages may be, they are not sufficient to make a good minister for the department he held. Therefore the Regent, in placing him at the head of the council, gave him nothing more than a public representation, without the real administration. The marshal flattered himself he should have the distribution of favours, but means were soon found to take it away from him; it was decided that this distribution should be made in full council. It would have been a perpetual source of frightful dissensions among the members ; but they liked better to operate each of them with the Regent, relative to the different military corps over which they were particularly, charged to watch, and leave him to pronounce the appointment ; this is really what happened, and the Regent disposed of favours with as much authority as Lewis XIV. had done. Nothing remained to the military counsellors, than the care of digesting some ordonnances and regulations of discipline : and when they proposed any new expences, they found themselves subject to the examination and control of the two lowest members of the council of war ; men of the robe, who had in their departments, war, finances, contracts, distribution of funds—the real business of preceding war ministers, and the only one with which they ought to be charged. One was M. de Saint Contest, who had been a long time intendant of the frontier provinces ; the other M. le Blanc, master of requests. Treasurers, commissaries of [165] war, and contractors, knew these two gentlemen only ; consequently the whole machine of war turned upon them ; therefore M. le Blanc soon made himself master of the ground ; and when the secretaries of state were reestablished, he became one of them. The form

of the council of war existed, however, for some years ; but M. le Blanc having united all the details of M. de Saint Contest to his own, was the spring and pivot of it. He had the same credit as M. de Chamillard and M. de Louvois ever had before him. Certainly he was not without talents and address for his personal conduct, and he had a great knowledge of the business of the war office ; but the details of finance and military administration became very delicate in the midst of the pecuniary embarrassments occasioned by the system of M. Law, and afterwards by the Visa. In 1723, M. le Blanc was displaced, and sent to the Bastille, with the intention of prosecuting him. His department was filled by M. Breteuil, intendant of Limoge, a mild and pliant man, but extremely ignorant ; every body knows that the essential service which he rendered to the cardinal Dubois, procured him this place ; he supported himself under the Duke, by extreme complaisance to persons in favour. Messrs. de Belle-Isle and de Seichelles, intimate friends and counsellors of M. le Blanc, were also put into the Bastille, some months after him. The norm continued to threaten them during the whole administration of the Duke ; but as soon as the prince was sent to Chantilly, every thing changed ; M. de Breteuil returned to place, and the faction of Belle-isle and de Seichelles sent in their turn the two brothers, all powerful under the Duke of Orleans, one to the Bastille, the other into exile. In 1728 M. le Blanc died ; M. Dangervilliers, [166] intendant of Paris, who had for a longtime occupied the same post in the province of Alsace, took his place, and M. de Breteuil remained aloof.—M. Dangervilliers, son or grandson of a famous partisan, who lived under the administration of Colbert, is descended from a celebrated physician and botanist, has wit and talents, with defects, and some ridicule in his character.

The council of the marine was composed like that of war, and had the same fate ; the Count of Toulouse was its honorary chief, the Marital d'Estrees, president, and it was blended with some officers and old intendants of the marine, who were charged with all the details. La Chapelle, an old first clerk of M. de Pontchartrain, was secretary: as the marine was now reduced to a mere trifle,

this council appeared to be of little importance. As soon as the secretaries of state were reestablished, M. d'Armenonville, who had bought the employ of M. de Torcy, had the affairs of this department, the Abbe Dubois being charge des affaires etrangeres, as fifth secretary of state. M. de Maurepas retook the office of the Pontchartrains, his father and grandfather; but he had the expediting the affairs of the King's household, and of Paris only, under the inspection and orders of his father-in-law, la Vrilliere. This continued till 1722, when M. d'Armenonville became keeper of the seals; M. de Morville being secretary of state for the marine department. At the death of the Cardinal Dubois in 1723, M. de Morville took the administration of foreign affairs, and M. de Maurepas had the whole department possessed by his father previous to the death of Lewis XIV. The marine council had been suppressed in 1722 ; after having been for some time in a languishing state. The young marine minister is more amiable, [167] but still more ignorant than his father was; he delights in pleasantries, which may he called the pranks of a young courtier, rather than malice and acrimony of disposition, of which it was said his father was capable. But he enjoyed too soon the charms and advantages of administration, and it does not appear that he is yet acquainted with its duties and principles. He was but eighteen years of age, when his clerks said to him, " Monseigneur, amuse yourself, leave business to us ; if you wish to oblige any person, make your intentions known to us, and we will find proper means to give success to whatever you please. Moreover, forms and rules are learnt in proportion as affairs and opportunity present themselves, and enough of these will pass before your eyes, to give you in a short time more experience than we have." It must, however, be agreed, that we may pass a long life in labouring without principles, and never learn any thing, and that experience is rather the fruit of reflection upon what we have seen, than the result of an infinity of facts to which we have not paid all the attention they merited.

A council for home affairs was formed in 1716. The Duke of Antin was president ; the Marquisses of Bringen and Brancas were placed with some counsellors of state,

maitres des requetes, and counsellors of parliament ; this council was to be charged with the same object of administration as the present council of dispatches. It existed till the reestablishment of the secretaries of state, that is to say, about three years; after which M. de la Vrilliere returned to the care of the provinces which had formerly belonged to him. M. d'Armenonville and Maurepas were charged with the rest. The ministers of foreign affairs and that [168] of war, had authority at that time ; it was not till afterwards that they were restored to their places. At length, to all these councils was added one of commerce, the presidency of which was given to the Marshal Villeroy, a man of the world, to whom the Duke of Orleans was little disposed to give employment and consideration. With him was associated many counsellors of state, and maitres des requetes, to whom was distributed the care of different branches of commerce; and they were not only charged to watch over them, but to make proper regulations, whereby they might be augmented and improved. Nothing could be more interesting to the state, than what might result from such a council ; but it was necessary it should be directed, that there should be an unanimity in its operations, which should all have tended to one end only ; but this is what was wanting in that as well as in all the other councils : when the Marshal Villeroy was disgraced, it was destroyed, or, at least, it remained two or three years in inaction. It was at length reestablished under the name of the royal council of commerce ; the king presided there as well as at the royal council of finances, that of dispatches, and at the council of state, properly so called. The names of a part of the ministers, and of some counsellors of state, are upon the list of the members of this council ; the controller general of finances, and the secretary of state for the marine department, are essential members of it. There was a board of commerce more numerous established to propose such business as was to be laid before the council. The offices of the intendants of commerce created under Lewis XIV. were reestablished, [169] and each commercial city lent a deputy to Paris. All this presents the idea of a wise and good administration; but it is, in reality, upon paper only; the royal council of commerce never assembled, the board but seldom, the intendants and deputies act with the

Controller-general only, and know nobody but him ; the latter are his clerks, and former his clients : finances and commerce may be said to be the same thing in France, and to move round the same axis.

It ought to be concluded, from the suppression of the councils established under the regency, and the inactivity in which the principals of the royal councils which decorate our almanacks are suffered to languish, that it is not yet known in France what advantage may be derived from councils, distinguishing well what ought to be submitted to their deliberation, from that which should be left to the daily decision of ministers of each department; and what ought to be laid before the king, from that which they may personally decide upon in their cabinets. All the ordonnances, and the general regulations, which form the law, and establish principles in the administration, ought to be deliberated upon in council, discussed, seriously examined, and finally decided therein, as far as agrees with the constitution of a monarchy, where in every council ought to be nothing more than a deliberative body. Every question agitated there, ought to be clearly proposed, and it is the duty of the minister to make this proposition. Each minister ought to be the reporter of the affairs relative to his department, as he is to look to their execution when once they are regulated. I speak not of little private affairs with which the board is at present amused, in the royal councils of finance and dispatches, when they are assembled, but of [170] general regulations, for which alone councils, at which the king assists in person, should be called together. Ministers are not sufficiently aware of the importance it is to them to have guarantees for these regulations. By taking them upon themselves, they are exposed to become responsible for every difficulty they suffer either in the registering or execution; they are frequently victims to their imprudence, and thus furnish occasions of being displaced. With respect to favours, councils should be acquainted with the principles only upon which the minister proposes them ; but it is highly important even for ministers, that these principles should be somewhere deposited; they ought to be their buckler to fortify themselves against unjust demands : and it is highly

necessary they should thus defend themselves. For one favour against rule and reason which the minister accords to those whom he personally and really protects, he is obliged to grant twenty others to persons protected by his patrons, and by those to whom he cannot refuse any thing; in that case, being pressed, he knows not what to answer if he refuses to one what he grants to another, he creates to himself disagreeable cavils. A wise man, on going into place, ought to take more measures to enable him to refuse, without doing himself much harm, than to give every thing according to his fancy ; for it is certain he can never bring about the latter. However, he should always refuse without caprice, and receive with mildness even the most unreasonable demands ; and, above all, never promise that which he is not sure to perform : Hoc opus, bib labor.

ESSAY XXXV.

Exemplary Character of Cardinal Rohan.

I have just treated, in a long article, an important subject, to establish occasionally great maxims, and draw interesting portraits. I dare assert their justness and resemblance having spoken according to personal and certain knowledge only I have described statesmen, or at least those who should have been so. At present I mean to treat of the principles of conduct men ought to follow in private life, and in society, always from my own experience, or the examples of persons with whom I have been most acquainted.

The most perfect model of a great and amiable man of rank is the Cardinal Rohan ; although he is but a man of middling abilities, contracted in erudition and reading, has neither been charged with the administration of the higher departments, nor applied himself much to important affairs, he has a remarkable advantage over those who have been deeply engaged in negotiations and public business. He has neither the figure nor features of a prince

fit to command armies ; but he is the most handsome prelate in the world ; and, when young, was a charming abbe of quality. He maintained his thesis, in the Sorbonne, in a distinguished manner; his lesson was given him ; but he retained it with facility, and he delivered it with grace. Having obtained early the bishopric [172] of Strasburgh, and the Cardinal's hat, he was charged with negotiations at the courts of several German Princes, and in the Conclave at Rome, he always got through them with dignity and ease ; and, certainly, is any body has been able to verify the singular and proverbial expression, that men of quality know every thing, without learning any thing, it is the Cardinal de Rohan. His policy was always passive ; he accommodated himself to time and place; to governments and circumstances. With such a conduct he might have appeared mean ; but he knew always how to stamp his actions with a character of nobleness, in such a manner as to be applauded by fools, and pardoned by men of understanding. He declared himself, according to circumstances, in favour of the bull Unigenitus, or left the Jansenists to think as they thought proper. He was made a member, of the council of the Regency, at the end of the administration of the Duke of Orleans, to insure the Cardinal Dubois the same rank as the Cardinals Richelieu and Mazarine had enjoyed in the council. It was perceived that Dubois had no right to pass over such a charm after eighty years interruption. The birth of M. de Rohan, and the dignities with which he was invested, independently of the cardinalship, made him susceptible of it, but he was the forerunner only of a prime minister very unworthy of that high office ; after all, what could the Cardinal Rohan lose by this complaisance ? He acquitted himself of the ceremonies of the church, to which his office of great almoner obliged him, in the most becoming manner, without affecting too much devotion : neither is he accused of hypocrisy ; nor can any reproach him with indecency. He behaves more nobly at Strasburgh and Saverne than any German prince, [173] or even the ecclesiastical electors : his court and retinue are numerous and brilliant; with all this, he preserves that air of decency which the distinguished members of the French clergy have, and which is not to be found among those of Germany and Italy ; he is gallant, but he finds opportunities enough to

satisfy his inclination to pleasure with great princesses, fine women, and canonesses double proof, so as not to demean himself by gallantry; or, at least, to be accused of low debauch. The cardinal, sometimes, in speaking of himself, modestly gives you to understand, there must be in him some resemblance of Lewis XIV. as well in his person as his character ; in fact, the Princess of Soubise, his mother, was very beautiful; we know that Lewis XIV. was in love with her, and the epocha of this penchant is near the year 1674, in which the Cardinal de Rohan was born. If there be any truth in this anecdote, we may add, that, descended from a very great prince, It is possible other great princes owe to him their existence. His politeness to individuals who go to see him, whether it be at his bishopric, the court, or at Paris, proceeds certainly more from habitude than sentiment ; but carries so much the mark of friendship, that, even though persuaded that it is not sincere, men suffer themselves to be seduced by it. As soon as you arrive he seems to have a thousand things to say to you, as a confidential favourite, and soon afterwards he leaves you to speak to another; but, while he does what is most agreeable to himself, he seems to think only of leaving you master of his house, withdraws for fear of embarrassing and importuning you, which on the contrary, you would embarrass and importune him by prolonging your visit. In a word, nobody possesses the talent of pleasing more than [174] the Cardinal de Rohan; but it does not belong to every one to make use of the same means. Every body is not permitted to go to Corinth; this old adage may be applied to the use of more than one amiable quality ; there are people who may neglect some one of them : others who ought to collect as many as possible, and who still succeed with difficulty, notwithstanding all the resources, furnished them by nature.

ESSAY XXXVI.

On Punctuality.

I will return in a moment to the art and means of pleasing

; but I wish to say a word more upon exactitude, and punctuality : these are merits of the second order; they seem to belong to subalterns only ; yet they are sometimes very valuable: I confess that I am scrupulously attached to them, although I have a strong domestic example to the contrary. My father was the least punctual of any man living ; he never knew what it was o'clock; charged with an infinity of details, most of them very important, but of different kinds, he got through them when he could, or when he would be fits and starts, though interrupted [175] incessantly by one or the other ; but his sure and active genius supplied every thing: he always found the end of his threads, although he broke them every moment ; and embraced successively an hundred different objects, without confounding them. I admired this wonderful talent, but never perceived that I possessed it. I have introduced more method, order, and punctuality in my proceedings, but my brother took the resolution of imitating my father. For my part, I thought it might be presumptive to follow that route, where nature had not pointed it out. Moreover, when you are not sure of being above proceeding methodically, and with, notwithstanding, to attain that elevation, you run a risk of being unequal to your affairs, and of losing and dishonouring yourself.

[76] ESSAY XXXVII.

On the Art of Pleasing.

Moncrif, who is attached to my brother, came to communicate to me his project of printing a book, intituled : *De la necessite et des moyens de plaire*. "My dear Moncrif," said I to him, " nothing is so easy as to treat upon the first head of thy discourse ; all the world feels it; all the world has a desire to please, but the means are extremely difficult to be found : it is a difficult, and very delicate matter to indicate the true ones; they depend upon a great number of circumstances, which make them vary ad infinitum." From this I entered with him into

particulars, of which I have since committed a part to paper. After hearkening to me attentively, " Sir," answered he, humbly, " I will make use of the sage reflections you have just communicated to me ; but the plan of my work is not laid exactly in the manner you propose."—" Thy work ! is it already finished ?" replied I. " Yes, Sir, it is in the press." In fact, in a very little time afterwards, he brought it to me, printed and well found : I have read it, and this reading has recalled to my mind what a man of wit, a friend of mine, once said to me, as we were walking in a great library, where there were a multitude of books upon speculative philosophy, metaphysics [177] and morality : " Here are," said he, " thousands. of volumes, of which the greatest number ought to be suppressed, and the rest new modelled:"—that of Moncrif is so much the more of the latter description, on account of its being very unanimatedly written : it is, therefore, tiresome, although a small volume he finishes with fairy tales, above the capacity of children, and not interesting enough to men.

Moncrif said himself that the marvellous could not be agreeable, but by the manner of representing it ; that otherwise improbability disgusted and fatigued. His tales are the bell proofs of this truth.

Moncrif's mother was the widow of a procureur, called Paradis. She was a woman of wit, and, knew how to use it to advantage, and to bring up two children, which her husband had left her. By the protection of my brother one of them became a subaltern officer, and, at length, commander of a small place ; the eldest had he greater share of his mother's affection, who, to introduce him into the world, made the last efforts to cloath him well : she sent him to the theatres, to the places set apart for the most distinguished people, where he might make useful acquaintances. Moncrif, following his mother's counsels, became acquainted with me and my brother, amongst others. This has been beneficial to him ; our relations were in place ; my brother made him his private friend and secretary, upon the most genteel footing : some years

afterwards he attached himself to the Comte de Clermont, Prince of the Blood, and he had the flattering title of secretary to his commanderies ; he had even a list of vacant benefices depending upon this Prince-Abbe ; but he proposed no subject but with the approbation of certain women of the [178] opera. He quarrelled with this little court ; but my brother repaired all by making him reader to the queen, and secretary general of the polls. It is said he had learned to fence, and that he was even received as a fencing-master ; what makes this probable is, that when Moncrif became reader to the queen, and consequently at court, his age was enquired after : his friends wished to prove him older than he appeared to be, and quoted the epochs of his reception in the corps of fencing-masters. M. de Maurepas would allure himself of it ; and, having had occasion to read the list of the members of this community, who prayed a renewal of their privileges, he found, in fact, the name of Paradis at the head. He asked the Syndics what was become of this matter : the answer was, that he had disappeared for some time, and consequently renounced the profession. The minister, who, as every body knows loves a title waggery, related this anecdote to the king. According to this account, Moncrif was eighty years of age. Lewis XV. having laughed at it a good deal, finding Moncrif one day with the queen, said to him, Do you know, Moncrif, that there are people who give you eighty years of age? Yes, Sire, answered he, but I do not take them. For my part, I do not believe that Moncrif has been a fencing-master ; it must rather have been his brother, in whom his mother could not find other talents for society than fencing, which is not a very social one.

I return to Madame Paradis. With wit, reading, an agreeable manner, and address, she procured herself a good income. Towards the end of the reign of Lewis XIV. there was more pretension to wit in intrigues than at present : it was the custom to write gallant notes, which required [179] answers of the same kind, and the ardour of the cavalier was judged of by the energy of the letters which he got secretly delivered : the lover, in the same manner, calculated his hopes according to the answer. Madame Paradis devoted herself to the epistolary style ;

being known to several ladies of the gallant court of Lewis XIV. she assisted them with her pen to make agreeable advances, or give tender answers ; and this was no real injury to her fortune, nor to the advancement of her son. Moncrif appeared to inherit the talent of his mother. My brother having made a journey into Touraine, became intimately and particularly acquainted with a lady of this province. After his return to Paris, he received from her some letters of gallantry, to which, in politeness, he could not but return answers. He charged Moncrif to write them, who acquitted himself like a worthy son of Madame Paradis, and spared my brother the trouble of even copying them. But the most whimsical consequence of this correspondence was, my brother having become minister, and the young lady a wise, she had occasion to write about some affair to her old lover; and was much surprised at not finding, in his answers, either the style of the letters she had preserved, or even the same hand-writing : we may learn by this, that ministers, and those who are destined to become so, do not always do that of themselves, from which they gain the most honour.

As I said to Moncrif, there is nobody but is convinced of the necessity of pleasing, and who has not, more or less, the desire, of doing it ; but this is not all ; talents are moreover necessary. Every actor upon a theatre carries with him the desire of being applauded ; yet there are many who come off with being hissed and hooted. To succeed, [180] two kinds of talents are necessary ; those which nature gives, and cannot otherwise be acquired, stature, figure, and an agreeable voice ; natural, easy, gay, and amiable wit; those who possess not these advantages, should procure to themselves a fictitious amiability ; though it is never worth that which is real, and what may properly be called innate : but still it is of some value ; it is studied, but it must appear natural ; is insensibly gained by habitude ; and the occupation of improving acquired advantages becomes agreeable.

The desire of excelling cannot be too much concealed ; on the contrary, what ought to be most remarked, or

supposed in you, is the desire of making others appear to advantage. Affection, or at least the appearance of it ; admiration, real or pretended ; flattery, delicately managed, never fail to succeed. When you perceive that any particular vice is displeasing, affect the opposite virtue. This contrast is the art of pleasing in society, what the *claro obscuro* is in painting : the colouring must be heightened by contrasts; the colours must be laid on thick, and the pencils managed with delicacy. Good-nature, sincerity, and complaisance, must be affected, yet tinctured with a little criticism.

A satirical character is frightful and displeasing in itself; but, as able physicians transform poisons into remedies, men of great wit manage criticism and irony so as to amuse some persons, and correct others, without saying any thing offensive; and what else is fable and good comedy ?

Let us acknowledge that we strive not to please others but from a motive of self-love : but it is necessary to veil it so as to prevent its being even suspected. Let us go still further, and add, that [181] we must not be too anxious about people whom we wish to please : they are embarrassed by being spoken well of in their presence ; they would often prefer being criticised, provided it did not exceed what they could defend with advantage.

Compliance is the last spring to put in motion, and which acts well in secret only : such as are known to be of an accommodating character are suspected ; we are inclined to look upon them as deceitful, and even treacherous.

We easily persuade those who are in affliction, that we ourselves are affected by it, because who ever partakes of trouble cannot be suspected of interested views; but nothing is more difficult than to persuade those who are happy, and arrive at great employs, that we rejoice sincerely at their good fortune : they think, and with

reason, that we should trouble ourselves but little about it, if our personal interest were not concerned therein. Men, in a subordinate situation, are not thanked for their complaisance : it is looked upon as one of their obligations ; it is even, sometimes, by this they get their bread ; but it very valuable in superiors, provided it be not suspected to take its source from weakness or simplicity.

Indulgence for faults, which is founded upon indifference only, humiliates him who experiences it, and renders odious the person by whom it is exercised.

A disdainful air, a contemptible tone, make great men hated ; but a low and cringing manner, make them despised, which is still worse.— A noble politeness is what they ought to be ambitious of, and which they often possess; but that which is equally rare and precious in all ranks is equability. Unhappily its opposite is not discovered till after a certain time of probation ; we [182] are frequently seduced into strong connexions, before we discover that those with whom we have formed them are unworthy of our esteem, because they have for sometime imposed upon themselves the necessity of pleasing ; on the first neglect, their defects, and insupportable humour appear; the beginning of the acquaintance was serene and agreeable ; the end of it becomes clouded, and sometimes tempestuous ; but when an engagement is formed, life passes in regretting the first moments ; they return but seldom, and it is necessary to console ourselves for an attachment to a person of a capricious and unequal character, by recollecting the agreeable moments we have passed together, and by enjoying the hope of finding others like them.

The reflection with which Moncrif finishes his book, appears to me to be the most sensible thing in it, and is as follows : " A man, on entering the world, should expect to find two judges of all his actions,—reason and self-love, or the interest of others. The first of these judges is always equitable and impartial ; the second severe, and frequently

unjust: ; it is the child of jealousy ; let us strive not to allure it : this is the means of pleasing and succeeding."

I have related; in a few pages, all the maxims worth quoting from Moncrief's book ; *De la necessite et des moyens de plaire*, in which there are three hundred.

[183] ESSAY XXXVIII.

On Indifference exemplified in the Character of Fontenelle, Montesquieu, and Henault.

I have often heard this bad maxim advanced, "that he who is not a great enemy, is not a good friend : " by which is undoubtedly meant, that he who is not capable of strong hatred and vengeance, cannot be warm in the service of his friends. But let us make a distinction between the excesses into which our passions may lead us, and the consequences of a wise and deliberate attachment ; friendship ought to be of the latter description only ; if it became a passion, it would lose its respectability ; and be attended with all the dangers of love, which is the cause of as many evils as hatred and vengeance. God preserve us from too much love as well as from too much hatred ; but we ought to love to a certain degree : the heart of man has need of this sentiment, and it is of use to our minds, when it does not obscure them. But hatred and the love of vengeance cannot do otherwise than torment us : happy are they who feel not these passions ; cannot we on the principle of rational affection, serve our friends with alertness and constancy, and be even tenacious in affairs in which they are interested ? Is it necessary to be cruel to one man, [184] because we are friendly to another? Does the malice of a persecutor, and the unremitting affection of a friend, flow from the same complexion of mind ? By no means ; for my part, I declare myself a weak enemy, not only in force but in intention, although I am a zealous and steady friend.

If I have received some reproaches upon my pretended indifference for people with whom I live habitually, three of them deserve many more, and I do not esteem them less on this account—their names are well known in the world, since the first is M. de Fontenelle, the second the President de Montesquieu, and the third, the President Henault. The first is charged with and convicted of a kind of apathy, perhaps blameable with respect to others, but excellent for his own preservation ; being taken up with himself only, and amiable enough to make others concerned for his welfare, he has, by managing his weak and delicate constitution, always indulging his case, pushed his career to eighty years of age, with the pleasing hope of seeing the whole revolution of the century. Each year gives him a new degree of merit, and adds to the interest his friends have in his existence. They look upon him as one of those master pieces of art, carefully and delicately wrought, and preciously preserved, because it is impossible to make their equal. He makes us not only recollect the brilliant age of Lewis XI V. the end of which some of us saw, but also the wit of Buiserade, Saint-Evremont, Scudery, and the tone of the Hotel de Rambouillet, the air of which we may believe he has breathed upon the spot. He has this tone, but softened, improved, and adapted to the present age, less obscure and [185] pedantic than that of the Beaux-Esprits, which founded the academy ; less finical than that of Julie d'Augennes, and his mother. His conversation is highly agreeable, mixed with sentiments less refined than striking, and with pleasing anecdotes, without being satirical, because they never relate but to literature or gallantry, and society. All his tales are short, and for this reason more striking ; they finish by something witty, which is a necessary condition of such narratives. The eulogiums which he pronounces at the Academy of Sciences, have in them the same spirit as his conversation; they are consequently delightful ; but I do not know is his manner of presenting them be such a one as he ought to make use of : he attaches himself to the persons of Academicians, strives to characterise, to paint them ; even enters into details of their private life ; and as he is an agreeable painter, his portraits are admired : but might not some of them be compared to fine engravings, found at the head of the works of certain heroes ? they present us

with their physiognomy, but leave us with a with that they had done something more.

It seems to me that the eulogium of an Academician, should be the extract or crayon only of his academical works. It may be objected to this, that there are Academicians whole works and talents furnish not matter of great eulogium; but on one hand, even the barrenness or refusal of eulogiums, is one means of preventing the Academy from admitting subjects incapable of doing it much honour : on the other, the protection which those who are honorary Members only, have granted to the sciences, the favours they have procured, for the learned, may be advantageously spoken of [186] in their behalf, and at least their zeal applauded. —It must, however, be agreed, that Fontenelle, in artfully passing over the dryness of matters to which those who were the subjects of his encomium applied themselves, says generally what is necessary. It is to be feared, his successors and imitators will find it easiest to speak but little upon the subject, otherwise they will fail in it entirely.

To return to the personality of Fontenelle, we know he loves nothing to a great degree ; but I pardon him his indifference, and love him better on account of it; we love him for himself only, without requiring a return or being flattered by it. —We may say of him what Madame de Deffant - said of her cat—" I love her exceedingly, because she is the most amiable creature in the world ; but I trouble myself little about the degree of affection she has for me: I should be very sorry to lose her, because I feel that I manage and perpetuate my pleasures, by employing my my-cares to prolong her existence."

The President de Montequieu is not so old as Fontenelle, but has full as much wit, although of quite another kind—it seems as if more ought to be expected in society from the President, because he is more lively, even appears more active, more susceptible of enthusiasm. At bottom, there two minds are tempered alike; Montesquieu never makes

himself uneasy for any body, he has no ambition on his own account ; he reads, travels and gathers knowledge , at length he writes, and solely for his pleasure. Being a man of great sense, he makes an agreeable use of what he knows, but there is more wit in his books than in his conversation, because he is never anxious to shine in it. He has preserved the Gascon accent, which he has from [187] his country (Bordeaux), and thinks it in some measure beneath him to strive to get rid of it. He is careless in his style, which is more ingenious and sometimes more nervous than pure ; there is no order nor method in his works, which are for this reason more brilliant than instructive. He had an early taste for a kind of bold philosophy, which he has combined with French gaiety and levity, and which has made his *Lettres Persannes* truly a delightful work. But if, on one hand, this book has been much admired, it has on the other, been justly complained of ; there are passages which a man of wit may easily conceive, but such as a prudent man ought never to let appear in print: these passages, have, notwithstanding, established the reputation of the book and the author. He would not have been of the Academy without this work, which ought to have excluded him from it. The Cardinal de Fleury, so prudent in other respects, shewed on this occasion a pusillanimity which may be attended with great consequences. The President resigned his employment, that his non-residence at Paris might not be an objection to his being received a Member of the Academy. His pretext was, that he was going to apply himself to a great work upon the spirit of laws. The President Henault, on quitting his employ, gave the same reason. These gentlemen were rallied by their friends, who told them, " They quitted their professions in order to learn it."

The fact is, Montesquieu wished to travel, to make philosophical remarks upon men and nations, already known by his *Lettres Persannes* : he was warmly received in Germany, England and Italy. We do not know the whole extent of the observations and reflections he made in different [188] countries.—Since his return, he has published but one work, printed in 1734, intituled, *Considerations sur les causes de la grandeur et de la*

decadence des Romains. In this work he appears more sensible, enlightened and reserved than in his *Lettres Persannes*, the matter keeps him from wandering. It is said, he is preparing to publish his great work upon the spirit of laws : I know already some parts of it, which supported by the reputation of the author, cannot but augment its credit ; but I fear the whole will not have this effect, and that there will be more agreeable chapters to read, more ingenious and seducing ideas, than true and useful instructions upon the manner in which we ought to digest and understand the laws. It is, however, a book which has been, and still is, greatly wanted, although much has been written upon the subject.

We have good institutes of the Roman civil laws ; we have tolerable ones in the French laws ; but we have none published of general, or universal ones. We have no *Esprit des Loix*, and I doubt much of our friend Montesquieu's giving us one which will serve as a guide and compass to all the Legislators of the world. I know him to have all possible art ; he has acquired vast knowledge in his travels, and in his retreats to the country ; but I predict once more, that he will not give us the book we want, although there will he found, in what he is composing, many profound ideas, new thoughts, striking images, sallies of wit and genius, and an infinity of curious facts, whose application supposes still more taste than study.

I now return to the character he bears in society; great mildness and gaiety, a perfect equality, an air of simplicity and good nature, which, considering the reputation he has already acquired, is a peculiar merit. He is sometimes absent, and [189] strokes of naivete escape him, which make him appear more amiable, as they form a contrast with his acknowledged wit. I forgot to speak of his little poem in prose in the Grecian talk, intitled *Le Temple de Guide*. I know not is the reputation of the President, gained by his *Lettres Persannes*, has not contributed to make this trifle deemed above its merit : it contains much wit, sometimes & grace and voluptuousness, whose touches in some places are rather strong, and there reigns a kind of

philosophical observation, which characterises the author, but it is different from those of his other works.— Fontenelle certainly could not have written *Les Consideration sur les Romains* ; but *Le Temple de Guide* would have been better constructed by him than by Montesquieu.

I will not oppose the gallantry of the President to that of Fontenelle, because Montesquieu had none: he writes little or no poetry, but he is found amiable in society, independent of gallantry and poetry. Fontenelle has, on the contrary, need of these resources ; the gracefulness and manner in which, from the mouth of any other man would be insipid, make his science and erudition appear to advantage, although they are perhaps not very profound.

The President Henault, will not perhaps hold so distinguished a place in the temple of memory as the two others, but I find he deserves to be preferred to them both in society : he is younger than Fontenelle, and less troublesome, because he requires less complaisance and attention ; he is on the contrary, very complaisant himself, in the most simple, and at the same time elegant manner. This virtue seems to cost him nothing ; for which reason there are people unjust enough to believe him indiscriminate and prodigal in the use of it ; [190] but those who know him well and are near to him perceives that he knows how to distinguish ; and that a sound judgment and great knowledge preside at the distribution. His character, especially when he was young, appeared formed to succeed with women ; he had wit, grace, delicacy and refinement—he cultivated successfully music, poetry, and light literature ; his music was not of a profound composition, but agreeable—his poetry was not sublime ; however, he undertook a tragedy ; it is weak, but neither ridiculous nor tiresome.— His other poetry is like that of Fontenelle, harmonious and witty : his prose, easy and flowing; his eloquence is neither masculine nor sublime, although he gained premiums, at the Academic Francoise, thirty years ago. It is never strong or elevated, dull or insipid : he was sometime father of the oratory, and

has contracted in that society a taste for Rudy, and acquired some erudition ; but this without the least pedantry. I have been assured, that in a court of judicature, he was a good judge, without having a perfect knowledge of the laws, because he has an upright mind and a sound judgment. He never had magisterial haughtiness, nor the vulgarity of the limbs of the law. He does not pride himself upon his birth or illustrious titles : he is rich enough to be independent, and in this happy situation, using no pretensions, he wisely places himself below insolence, and above meanness. There are women of sufficient consideration, who have overlooked his want of birth, even of personal advantages, and vigour. He has ever conducted himself on these occasions with modesty, never carrying his pretensions too far ; nothing was ever required of him which was improper he should do,---at sixty years of age, he declared he would confine himself to a studious and devout [191] life ; he made a general confession of all his sins, and it was on this occasion he permitted himself the following pleasantry, “we are never so rich as when we remove. His devotion is as free from fanaticism, persecution, sourness and intrigue, as his studies are from pedantry. He applies himself to compose an *Abrege Chronologique* of our history, which will have the merit of an exact chronology, well composed tables, and a summary of facts methodically arranged, and yet without being dry, sterile, insipid, or tiresome. We may not only seek and find therein every thing necessary to fix in our minds the principal epochas of our history ; but we than be able to read with pleasure this abridgment, from beginning to end; the author having prepared for the reader resting places, if I may be allowed the expression, in the long route he has to get through. The most interesting facts will be related with clearness and precision, and particular remarks will determine at each epocha, what were then our manners and principles : finally, this book, excellent in itself, will serve as a model, according to which many other good and useful books may be composed.— There is reason to believe, that all the different histories will soon be written in the same manner, and that this first work will be the basis of a new and instructive kind. I agree, nevertheless, that the literary reputation of the President Henault, will never equal that of Fontenelle or

Montesquieu ; but I am of opinion, that his only work will be more useful than all theirs ; because it will open a new career to the progress of science; whilst the others will only produce had imitators, who will go astray, in endeavouring to tread in their steps. But to reduce to a few words the character of the President Henault, he is accommodating [192] without deceit ; mild without insipidity ; officious without interest or ambition; complaisant without meanness ; a good friend, without enthusiasm or prejudice : in short, he is as perfect a model in society as his book is in its kind.

ESSAY XXXIX.

On the natural Turn for Scandal and Raillery.

The love of scandal is so founded upon the malignity natural to most men, and especially to women, that this vice will never be out of fashion ; the levity of our nation makes scandal more common in France than any where else. But at least, we abhor calumny, we look upon it as a vice, the principles of which are the most culpable, and its consequences may be the most pernicious. We are as fearful of becoming calumniators as murderers, and this with much reason. As for scandal, when it is well retailed, is a means of pleasing in society,—it animates conversation,—those present are amused by speaking ill of the absent ; one company is made to laugh at the follies of another. But this sportiveness must be light, agreeable and satirical : let us leave to old and peevish devotees, the bad habit of malignantly slandering their [193] neighbours,—of reproaching young persons with defects, which they compensate by some good qualities, or with faults against which the aged cry so loudly, only because they can no longer commit them.

To rally agreeably, it is necessary to have a graceful delivery ; and this is no common talent. Light

circumstances are sometimes added to the story, to render it more poignant ; but it must not be lengthened by them, nor the narration retarded. Mix your recitals with but few observations--draw no conclusions from them, but leave your auditors to make such malignant reflections as you will easily suggest to them ; these will be so much the more approved of, as they will believe them to come from themselves. I knew in my younger days, some excellent story-tellers; they seem to be more rare at present ; I think so perhaps, by anticipation, from the mania common to old people, of believing that every thing degenerates ; but, however, this may be, I mean to form some day a list of the good story-tellers of my time, and to characterise each of them by some one of their best stories, which I shall easily recollect. --Madame Cornuel compared stories to those matelotes, (rich ragouts, like turtle) of which it is said, the fish is eaten for the sake of the sauce;" in like manner, said she, the best stories are best related. We have a proof of this in the famous tales of the Abbe de Boisrobert, at which the great Cardinal Richelieu laughed so much. Douville, brother to the Abbe, has had them printed, and nothing is more insipid on being read ; but this is because we have no longer the story-teller to make us relish them, yet it was not he who wrote them.

The man whom in all France I have heard tell the best story is the Duke of Maine, legitimated [194] son of the late King; he was otherwise a weak Prince, and had but middling talents; his wife, who prides herself upon being superior to him, in point of understanding, does not tell a story so well as he does ; and their two sons, the Prince of Dombes, and the Comte d'Eu, who in other respects do not pass for men of genius, possess their father's talent to a great degree.

The age is certainly become more moderate in many respects; slander is not spread with malignity and ill humour ; its consequences are more feared ; men are become circumspect, lest simple disputes should become serious affairs, which they wish to avoid. Perhaps, (let us secretly acknowledge it) we are become a little cowardly ;

but when we are unfortunate enough to be so, the true means of concealing it is to avoid disputes, and to this end it is necessary to take timely precautions. After all, I like the present age better than I should have done the preceding one ; men were certainly brave and daring ; but even the most prudent people were not in safety, because they were beset with those who were quarrelsome.— Society is at present more safe ; we have scarcely any thing to fear but trifling disputes or pleasantries easy to be borne with when we know how to reply to them. Formerly men devoured each other like lions and tygers ; at present, we play with each other like little dogs, which gnaw ; or young kittens, the strokes of whole claws are not mortal.

I like the raillery of men of wit, even though I should be the subject of it, better than the circumspection of fools : nothing can be more dull or ridiculous, than some of my acquaintance of this description ; their insipidity makes one almost sick ; from insipidity comes ennui ; and ennui is the pest of society.

[195] ESSAY XL.

The Countenance an Indication of the Interior Character.

The Countenance is a thing merely exterior, but, from which there are certain consequences to be drawn, to know the interior character and dispositions of persons. A firm and heady countenance supposes that a man preserves a pretence and a composure of mind ; on the contrary, an embarrassed Countenance indicates confusion, and a disturbed mind. Therefore those who are expert in gallantry, like skilful politicians, know how to take advantage of the appearance of the Countenance to forward their designs.

It would be equally impolite and awkward to discompose women in public ; there are private opportunities when we ought to be less circumspect. So the politician, in his private conferences, hazards blunt and unexpected propositions, observes the effects they produce upon him who has not prepared to receive them, according to which he pushes his point, or retreats. A certain and general rule in society is, that an amiable man never strives to embarrass any body, and takes such measures as not to be embarrassed himself; for nothing but embarrassment makes men of sense appear like fools.

As soon as a man is in place, or has acquired a fortune, he presently acquires haughtiness and airs [196] of importance, which is easily believed to be the distinguishing mark and proof of superiority. Nevertheless the more we are elevated, the more affable we ought to be, except on certain occasions, wherein it is necessary to shew that we feel what we are, and to check those who would otherwise forget it, and fail in what is due to us.

I have somewhere read, that we ought never to lay aside an air of authority, so far as not to have it in our power to resume it when necessary; because appearance is often necessary to evince reality.

Never make a great blow with a timid air, the effect would be lost : but appear to pity those whom you are obliged to punish ; seem sorry to refuse those whose demands you cannot comply with, and to be happy and satisfied at having it in your power to confer upon them some favour. I shall be answered that all this is soon said, but very delicate and difficult of execution; I acknowledge it ; but it is what a man in place must study to acquire. *Hic meta laborum.*

Great babblers and tale-bearers have seldom a firm Countenance, or, at least, easily lose it.—Fools never have it; but half was possess it sometimes, and then it is a great

merit in them, as it conceals a part of their folly. As a grave Countenance is generally accompanied with slowness in deliberation, this gives time to reflect upon what is to be laid or done; men of this description make fewer mistakes and foolish expressions.

The Countenance of superiors is never embarrassing to people who have been well brought up ; he has learned betimes the danger of being, insolent ; but meanness is always contemptible.—Moreover, as an honest man has nothing to reproach himself with, he is never embarrassed in [197] answering questions which are put to him ; and, if he has to ask in his turn, he gives his reasons with that confidence which virtue and justice inspire. It is equally necessary to be brief in the exposition of our reasons, in the narration of circumstances and stories ; in these we ought to press onto the point upon which they turn, abridge the preambles, and say no more than is necessary to lead to and discover it. The same in requisitions, no more should be said than is absolutely necessary to make known the desired object, and the reasons which may be decisive and determinate, for the person to whom the requisition is made, divesting it also of every accessory, and changing the prologue into an overture.

It is more difficult for superiors to conduct themselves with their inferiors. To receive well a solicitation, they ought to know to whom they speak, and be acquainted with the matter in question , which is not always the case on the first approach : whilst they are ignorant of the business, they ought to watch and attend ; neither to discourage nor flatter with hopes, but to hearken, and, is it be necessary, to bring, by degrees, the solicitor to the point, always avoiding all appearance of unfavourable prepossession: finally, to promise nothing but what they are sure to perform, and to give no hopes but such as are just and reasonable. —Moreover they ought to blend their politeness with that art which is not acquired but by a great knowledge of the world, and which cannot be learned in the dust of the cabinet. Business is done by men, and with men ; but, on the one hand, those who have lived

enough amongst them to acquire the art of satisfying a numerous audience, have frequently led too dissipated lives to have profoundly studied the bottom of affairs with which they are charged ; on the other, men who [198] have grown pale over papers, have not been sufficiently in the world. In both these cases there are risks, but rational people are well aware of them, and take their measures accordingly.

ESSAY XLI.

The Character and Summary of the curious Manuscripts of the Abbe De Choisy.

It has been long since observed that men of high birth are less insolent than those who arrive at eminence without that advantage ; but what has not been so generally remarked is, that the greatest princes are naturally timid ; accustomed to think themselves above all men, the least idea of superiority intimidates them ; they seldom meet with men of higher rank than themselves ; but the reputation of wit, science, knowledge of every kind, and even personal advantages, are, for them, so many objects of deference. They perceive themselves inferior in certain respects, to some of their subjects and courtiers. I know princes, who would be more embarrassed in conversing with an academician, than he would be in [199] haranging them publicly. The timidity of our princes is manifested by a silly look, by a stammering, and an embarrassed countenance. It would be as useless as ill-timed, to give examples of them.

Conversation is the consolation and reward of is studious and learned people; it refreshes them after the business of the cabinet, and, perhaps, by using alternately, these two means, one becomes as profitable as the other. This is true with respect to youth, who may improve as much from the

conversation of people who have seen a good deal, as from old books, full of great doctrine and variety of facts. But conversation alone is not sufficient, because it is generally too detached ; as reading fatigues, because books fix the attention too long on the same object. I know a religious order, (that of the Jesuits) whose principles are so many problems, censured by some, admired by others, but, from among whom, many good authors have assuredly been produced. This society admits, as far as it is possible, none but subjects, of happy dispositions ; and, during the course of their studies, the young fathers have a conversation of four hours with the old ones, who have acquired most science, experience, and knowledge of the world. Thus, with the Jesuits, men become communicative, open and amiable, while in the other orders, originally founded upon a recluse, hermetic life, one part of the day passes in chanting the praises of the Deity, and the other, in solitary study, meditating in retreat, and silently listening to masters.

When we have contracted an early taste for improvement from conversation, we are happy to be near old people who are capable of relating what they have seen and known the most interesting : [200] there is a manner of profiting by this, and of avoiding repetitions, to which they are but too subject. They must be examined upon things with which they are likely to be acquainted, and we may be assured they will relate them with pleasure; they may be led from epoch to epoch, from object to object, on different days, and under different pretexts, not to fatigue them : we may be sure of reading in their memory, as in a book, what it contains the most interesting and curious. I acted in this manner with my relation, the Abbe de Choisy, with whom I afterwards lived during the last years of his life. He died in 1724, upwards of eighty years of age. I must agree, notwithstanding all the friendship he had for me that he was not a man very estimable ; his mind was weak, and was more distinguished for his social qualities than good conduct. He became a member of the academy, and gained some degree or reputation there, because he wrote and spoke well. Otherwise, he did not appear worthy to become a bishop, nor to be employed in any important affair: he

always felt the effects of his effeminate education, and being no longer of an age to put on a woman's dress, he never was capable of thinking like a man. Notwithstanding all his defects, he was agreeable to listen to his old age; his memory was stored with anecdotes of the court, which he had frequented, although he was never of any consequence there ; and of the academy, in the midst of which he had lived for a long time. He had taste enough to judge of a sentiment or a witty expression; therefore, of the great number he had heard, some of the best remained in his memory; these he repeated frequently, and which I have retained : I found part of them written in the papers the Abbe left [201] me ; for he put all his work into my hands a little before his death. I have selected what appeared to me the most interesting, of which I have formed three great volumes; but not being able to refuse the communication of them to a lady of the family, who was desirous of reading them, she kept them a long time, and gave them to the Abbe D'Olivet, who took from the manuscript a work in two little volumes, which he got printed in Holland, under the title of *Memoires pour servir a l'Histoire de Lewis XIV. par feu M. l'Abbe de Choisy, de l'Academie Francoise*. These two volumes certainly contain, if the expression may be permitted, the flower of my manuscript. However, there still remains some thoughts which I can mix with reflections upon the works of the author, who, on giving them into my possession, informed me upon what occasion they were written.

There is only an abridgment in his Memoirs of what he more than once related to me in detail. His mother was a woman of wit, but, in my opinion, very intriguing: she was in the secret of the conspiracy of Cinquars, which terminated so unhappily for that young nobleman, his friend, and M. de Thou: that affair was founded on a real intrigue of ambitious and inconsiderate women. The Princess Marie of Gonzague, afterwards Queen of Poland, extravagantly in love with M. Cinquars, who had already made a good fortune for a man of the family of a little Parisian bourgeois, took it into her head, that the grand equerry, in connecting himself with the enemies of the state, might make the Cardinal de Richelieu, (already ill)

tremble, and procure himself the constable's sword. Certainly nobody, of the present ages would think of [202]making themselves useful by such means, but they were thought advisable an hundred years ago. Madame de Choisy was in the secret of this imprudent intrigue, and the Princess Marie of Gonzague had assured her that she would make her husband keeper of the seals; but the good man, M. de Choisy, father of the abbe, did not suspect that his wife gave herself so much trouble about his fortune.

He was intendant in Languedoc, and ordered to arrest M. de Cinqmars, at Montpellier, and to seize all his papers. He found him employed in burning a great part of them, and, surely, those which would have served to convict him. M. de Choisy, from pure goodness of heart, let him burn as many of them as he chose. " You are right," said the grand equerry to him, " in treating me with so much complaisance; you would be very sorry to find what I have just burned." In fact they were letters from the Princess Marie, and perhaps, from, Madame de Choisy, her confidant; the result of this was, that, although sufficient proofs were found to condemn M. de Cinqmars, there were none which discovered the intrigue of the women.

The abbe had often repeated to me what he slightly mentions in his Memoirs; that it was an effect of the policy of the Cardinal Mazarine, that MONSIEUR, brother to Lewis XIV. was brought up in the most effeminate manner, to render him pusillanimous and contemptible ; at present, this would appear, to us, to the last degree strange and ridiculous. Madame de Choisy gave into the extravagance, in consequence of her turn for intrigue, and she made her son adopt the same manner, to make her court to Monsieur. With respect to what regards this prince, we can [203] only shrug up our shoulders, on seeing. Cardinal Mazarine adopt such pitiful means; they were, as useless in effect, as injudicious in the contrivance. Monsieur was not less brave in war, notwithstanding his bad education, and, if he always found himself inferior to Lewis XIV. it was because nature had not given him such talents. On the contrary, every thing possible done to

render Gaston, brother to Lewis XIII. formidable, but he was never otherwise than a contemptible prince. The Abbe de Choisy preserved, as long as he could, that impertinent habitude of dressing like a woman, and the follies he was guilty of, under that adjustment, are but too well known.

One of the Manuscripts which he left me, contains his history, under the name of " The Countess of Barres," and, though not yet, I believe it will be printed ; as the same person who has published the Memoirs of the Abbe de Choisy, has given copies of this trifle : it will be found not badly written, containing pleasurable details, not too modest, but very agreeable to read. The history will at the same time be thought improbable ; I can, however, certify it to be a very true one. The old abbe, a long time after he had written the life of David and Solomon, both edifying histories, and the history of the church, related to me again his follies, with an unspeakable pleasure, and I looked with astonishment at a man, whose life had been full of such strange improprieties.

One of the longest pieces of Manuscript stolen from me, is the Memoirs of the Life of Cardinal de Bouillon, the abbe's intimate friend from their childhood to death : I will not repeat here what [204] has been printed ; but may justly conclude from it, that the Cardinal de Bouillon was a prelate of a middling capacity, who finished his career in the most despicable manner. He was exiled, and deprived of the revenues of his benefices, for attempting to make head against Lewis XIV. and his ministers. He recollected that his ancestors sold themselves dear; but they had something to dispose of, the principality and strong place of Sedan; they were well paid for these, in considerable lands and court honours; but they fell from independent princes, to rich, illustrious, and important courtiers. They could do nothing better than make their court to, and please Lewis XIV. or render great services to the state, like M. de Turenne, whose personal consideration supported the Cardinal de Bouillon, as long as this uncle lived. After the death of M. de Turenne, the cardinal continued his

improper conduct at court, and was, at length, a sufferer by it.

In the piece concerning the Cardinal Bouillon, there are two articles which are quite foreign to it, but which characterize well enough two ministers of Lewis XIV. one of whom is M. de Pomponne. The Abbe pretends that Madame de Choisy contributed to make him minister, because she found means to shew the king the letters which Mons. de Pomponne wrote to her when he was ambassador in Sweden; it is added that the king admired them, and conceived a great opinion of their author. It is astonishing that Lewis XIV. was under the necessity of having recourse to an ambassador's private letters to a woman, to judge of his capacity; but, without doubt, the king looked upon them to be more genuine, natural, [205] and less studied, than the dispatches the ambassador addressed to him, or to the minister of foreign affairs. Madame de Choisy was an old friend of M. de Pomponne, and to whom he seemed to open his heart, without discovering to her the secrets of state ; from thence Lewis XIV. concluded he would be a great minister ; he was, however, no more than an honest and prudent man, of middling talents. Chance has put into my hands all his correspondence, ministerial and private, during the five years he was in Sweden, which I have preserved in my library; I do not think it very brilliant, but sensible. He corresponded with M. de Lionne, who was far superior to him in his manner of writing. Nothing can be more elegant than the answers of M. de Lionne to the Comte d'Estrades, ambassador in Holland, which were printed there, with the dispatches of that ambassador. Men, destined to politics, ought to read this book, to form themselves for negotiations and public affairs. It discovers with what art M. d'Estrades conducted the Dutch to the point to which he was instructed to conduct them ; it was not, perhaps, always conformable to their interests ; but, in that case, he made them swallow the golden pill lent them by M. de Lionne. The minister and ambassador did not always explain clearly, in their dispatches, what their real designs were ; but they understood each other (to

make use of a proverbial expression) like two pick-pockets in a fair.

Another anecdote registered in the memoirs of the Abbe de Choisy, concerns M. de Croffi. It is said this minister was unjustly accused of being incapable of writing good dispatches. One of his first clerks, of the name of Bergeret, took upon [206] himself, with an affected modesty, all the credit of them. The abbe assures us that nothing was more false. This is neither the first nor the last time a like accident has happened to ministers, whose modesty and reserve have given favourable opportunities to their subalterns. Simple and natural prepossession attributes every thing to superiors; censorious and malignant minds, all to subalterns. Reason and justice divides between, them the merit of what is well done ; seconds have advantages enough, as they are not responsible for what is blameable and dangerous.*[* Bergeret had the impudence to solicit the place in the Academy Francoise, vacant by the death of M. de Cordemoi : he obtained it in 1675, and held it till the year 1684, when he died, without having ever composed any work not even, as reported, his discourse of admission, which however, is, in general, but a middling performance. He was replaced by the Abbe de S. Pierre.]

The Abbe de Choisy had the Abbe of St. Seine, in Burgundy : it is not very considerable, since, at present, it does not exceed six thousand livres a year. But he had moreover, the priory of St. Lo, in Normandy, which is a very beneficial one, and he was Dean of the cathedral of Bayeux, even before he was in orders. With all these he had an income of fourteen thousand livres a year. He entered into holy orders on his voyage to Siam. It appears by the journal of this voyage that, on the 7th of December, 1685, he received the four lesser orders ; on the 8th he was subdeacon, on the 9th deacon, and on the 10th a priest, all of which he received from the hands of the Bishop of Metellopolis, who made the voyage to Siam with him, on board the same vessel ; by means of which, he was, on leaving France, a [207] tonsured clerk, and a priest when he arrived at Siam.

The second Manuscript I found in the papers of the Abbe de Choisy, is intituled, *Memoires de M. de Cosnac, d'abord Eveque de Valence, puis Archeveque d'Aix*. He was a man of much wit, said many good things, and invented excellent stories. In his youth he busied himself a good deal in the intrigues of two courts, that of the Prince de Conti, brother to the great Conde, and that of Monsieur, brother to Lewis XIV. he quitted them successively, on account of some dispute, whose origin and motives are well related in the Manuscript which the Abbe d'Olivet got almost reprinted, intituling it, *Livre septieme des Memoires pour servir a l'Histoire de Louis XIV*. The court of these two princes cannot be described with greater truth and naivete than the Abbe de Choisy has done in this Manuscript; wherein, occasionally, are found, interesting and agreeable anecdotes of the court of Lewis XIV. their, authenticity may be relied upon; for, although I was not fully assured of this, they carry such an air of frankness and probability, as would alone prevent the least doubt of it.

I have but two circumstances to add to what has been printed by the care of the Abbe d'Olivet : one of them concerns the suspicions harboured upon the extraordinary circumstances of the death of Madame Henriette, first wife of the Duke of Orleans. It is known that this princess was taken ill one evening in summer, at St. Cloud, after having drank cold liquors, presented to her by an officer of her pantry, or her cupbearer. Her death caused a general consternation ; those most affected by it, were the officers of the household; they were afraid, and not without reason, of [208] losing their offices, which, in the houses of princesses, depend upon two lives, that of the princess, and of those who hold them. Monsieur removed their fears, by promising them, that when he should marry again, they should hold the same places with the new Duchess of Orleans, as they had with the first. The poor creatures, waiting for this event, lived as well as they could without salary or maintenance from the Duke; and few of them had laid up any thing : one, only, returned rich to Paris, where he bought a house, established himself, and

appeared contented with his state. A few years afterwards, Monsieur, having married the Princess Palatine of Bavaria, since mother to the regent Duke of Orleans, who died in his regency, kept his word with all the dependents of the defunct, and presented a list of them to Madame, saying that none of them were dead since the decease of their first mistress, nevertheless she perceived but one place vacant ; the princess asked the reason—as for that man, answered Monsieur, he is very well, but, I believe he will never serve you; he was the first officer of the pantry, or the first cup-bearer.—According to all appearance, Madame dared not examine further what this meant. I am sure of this anecdote; I know people who have seen the old officer; they have told me his name, [*Morel. Vide MSS. de Colbert.] which I have forgot ; he never spoke first of the court of Monsieur nor of Madame ; and, although he lived at Paris, never went to the Palais Royal, to St. Cloud, or Versailles ; it is said he was disconcerted even when interrogated about his old mistress. It was the Abbe de Dosnac, who being very old and Archbishop of Aix, having learned that Saint Francis of Salles had just been canonised, exclaimed. “What, M. de Geneve, [209] my old friend ? I am delighted at his good fortune; he was a well-bred and agreeable, and , even an honest man, although he cheated at piquet, at which we have often played together.”

It will easily be believed the company laughed. “But, Monseigneur,” said somebody, to him, “ is it possible a saint should cheat at play ?” Oh I ” replied the archbishop, “ he defended himself by saying that what he won was for the poor.”

I found, moreover, in the papers of the Abbe de Choisy, two little romances, well written, and which have never been printed, but the stories are not very interesting ; one is of knight-errantry, the other in the Oriental manner; also the adventures of an Abbe de Saze, who became converted by a mistake of the person ; a director of the seminary, a man of great piety, wrote to an Abbe de Saze, formerly a libertine, but afterwards a convert, that he

would go and pass shrove-tide with him, to employ in pious meditations that time which men of the world passed in profane diversions. The similarity of names caused a wrong-headed valet to give the letter to the Abbe de Saze, whom he found providing for his carnival, not only vile amusements, but even real parties of debauchery. The Abbe opened the letter, which was like a thunder-clap to him in his first movement he became furious ; in the second, agitated and troubled; finally, in the last, he took a firm resolution to become a convert. He went to confession, which he had not done for many years before : the confessor after having reprimanded him, but giving him, at the same time consolation, encouraged him to say mass, which he had not done for [210] a long time, although he was a priest, and in possession of great benefices : he said it, and with so much compunction, that he expired at the end of the sacrifice.

The Abbe de Choisy has left a little history of Madame de Guercheville ; most of the anecdotes it contains are known. Every body knows this lady was very handsome ; that Henry IV. was deeply in love with her ; that she refused his addresses ; and, that the king conceived so high an esteem for her, that he named her maid of honour to the queen, telling her that is he had known a more virtuous woman in his kingdom he would have given her the preference: but the Abbe related to me, verbally, a circumstance of this lady, which I do not remember to have met with any where else. Henry IV. knowing that Madame de Guercheville was at la Roche Guyon, resolved to make her a visit, and sent a gentleman to inform her, that the chace having led him into that part of the country, he begged a supper and a bed in her castle. The lady answered respectfully, that she would do every thing in her power to make the king's reception such as it ought to be. The enchanted monarch arrived, and found, at the bottom of the stairs, Madame de Guercheville, full dressed, and preceded by all her servants ; she conducted him modestly to the most elegant chamber. He saw, on passing by the kitchen-door, preparations for a great supper, and the lady announced to him, that as soon as he should be reposed, it should be served up effectively. The supper was ready as soon as he

was prepared for it; but, upon the point of sitting down to table he learned that Madame de Guercheville had ordered her coach, and was gone from the castle . Astonished and mortified he sent to her to know the [211] reason of the step she had taken : her answer was, " A king ought to be the master in every place he goes to, and I am very glad to be free in those I inhabit."

The anecdotes of the Marquis D'Arquien, father of the queen of Poland, wife of Jean Sobieski, collected by the Abbe D'Olivet, are inserted in the historical Memoirs of Lewis XIV. and form the eighth book.

I found, afterwards, in the Abbe's papers, a fragment which has not been published, undoubtedly because those who copied the others thought this badly arranged : it is so, in fact, but it does not, on that account, contain less interesting ideas, and curious remarks. It appears that in 1692, a little academy was formed, at the Luxembourg, whose object was to take up that which did not enter into the system of the three royal academies; the Academy Francoise, that of Sciences, and the Academy of Belles Lettres, which were already established ; the first fifty years, and the two, others twenty or thirty previous to it. Some people were of opinion that the law of nations, policy, jurisprudence, theology, and even moral philosophy, were not within the jurisdiction of these academies. It seems that it was to treat on these matters, and examine books of the same kind, that the new academy was established. The assemblies were to be held at the Abbe de Choisy's at the Luxembourg, once a week only, on the Tuesday, and was to be composed of no more than thirteen academicians, the master of the house included, who was to act as president. Nine of these thirteen are known in the literary world; the Abbés Dangeau, De Choisy, perpetual secretary, Testu, Renaudot, and De Caumartin, Messieurs D'Herbelot, Perrault, Fontenelle, [212] and the President Cousin. The Abbe de Choisy, Fontenelle, Perrault, the Abbe Testu, and the Abbe Renaudot, were already of the Academy Francoise, and the President Cousin became a member of

it afterwards ; but D'Herbelot was of the Belles Lettres only. I have the journal of what passed in this private academy for the year 1692 only ; perhaps it was of no longer duration. The academicians were bound to secrecy of what was said among them, because, as politics were to be discussed, reflections, improper to be divulged, might be made. The same secrecy was observed, with respect to moral and philosophical observations. These precautions were very wise ; and, it is very probable, that this attempt was unsuccessful, solely on account of their not being observed.

Among the numerous observations contained in this journal, a few of them appeared to me worthy of attention. The Abbe Renaudot maintained, at that time, that Varillas quoted in his manuscripts, in the king's library, what never existed. Another academician said, there were, in Clelie, and other modern romances, portraits which Varillas had wholly inserted in his history ; that Varillas had not blushed at pilfering from Scudery.

Perrault read there his poem, on the Creation of the world; some passages were highly approved of, but others severely criticised; the Abbe said there was too much imagination in a poem founded upon Genesis ; that it was not permitted to make Moses a better natural philosopher than he ought to appear according to his text, and that, above all, care should have been taken not to have made him a disciple of Descartes.

The Abbe de Choisy communicated to the assembly, the translation of the Imitation of Jesus [213] Christ, which he had undertaken. He consulted the members upon the title of this book, so much respected, which, according to his opinion, was not a proper one, for the book does not at all treat of the imitation of Christ, but of the interior consolations which christians may procure themselves. Although it was agreed that the Abbe was right, they represented to him the necessity of leaving the title as it had first appeared. One of them recollected, that in the

sixteenth century a translation of the imitation was published with the title of *L'Internelle Consolation*, and that it had no success, because the book of imitation was not understood by it.

The Abbe was prevented for the same reason from changing the titles of some chapters, whose matter did not correspond with what they promised. Finally, they told him, that is he wished to alter the translations already known of the imitation, it was necessary to examine scrupulously the Latin text, compare the manuscripts one with the other, establish his authorities, &c. &c. The Abbe answered his fellow Members, that all that would be *la mer a boire*—to drink the sea dry : he took no farther notice of it, and arranged his translation according to his fancy.

I cannot forbear relating a singular anecdote upon this translation, by the Abbe de Choisy. He dedicated it to Madame de Maintenon, who was then a devotee, and declared mistress to the King. To make his court to this Lady, the Abbe put at the head of his book, an elegant engraving of Madame de Maintenon, kneeling at the foot of a crucifix, and at the bottom, were the following words from David, *Audi, filia, concupiscet rex decorum tuum*—"Hearken, daughter, the King will desire thy comeliness." Every body was scandalized [214] at this application : the Abbe was soon obliged to take away the print from the remaining copies, having made presents only of a few before hand. He would not even give me a copy with the print. The Bibliomanes bought it very dear.

In a dissertation read by M. d'Herbelot, in the little Academy of the Luxembourg, upon the origin of the name of Pope, and the established custom in the Latin Church, of giving it to the Bishop of Rome exclusively, I find, independently of what is generally known, that it was a great question in 1630, under the Pontificate of Urban VIII. what title should be given to the Cardinals : they were upon the point of being called *Perfectissimi* and Your

Perfection ; at length these passed into Eminentissimi and Eminence. It is remarkable, that Urban VIII. ordered them to be called so, under pain of excommunication. M. Camus, at that time Bishop of Belley, wrote and preached devout romances, and introduced into these works some very singular things. M. M. les Cardineaus, had abandoned to the Bishops, the title of Illustrissimi and Reverendissimi, as they give to their valets their old purple cloaths and dirty linen.

The Abbe Renaudot, read a dissertation upon giants, in which there are very curious things ; but I think I have read most of them in some other work. I will only remark, that this dissertation was occasioned by a letter the President Cousin had inserted in the Journal des Savant, of which he was then the author; the letter was from a Vicar of Lassay, in the Diocese of Angers, who said, he had found in his garden a sepulchre, which contained a skeleton of seventeen feet two inches long : he offered to shew it to the curious.

It is known that the education of the great Constable Montmorency, had been so neglected as [215] not to be taught to read and write : yet he carried a book to mass, but this was merely for the sake of appearance. He signed patents and pancartes*[* Papers containing the duties on merchandizes.] in a very singular manner, upon the word of his Secretary, who laid them before him : he made twenty great scrawls one after another, after which, his Secretary stopped him, saying Monseigneur, there are enough. The company were shewn several signatures of this kind. This gave occasion to some one present to relate an anecdote of a Bishop of Angers, whole name I think, was Arnaud.—Becoming blind, he had an iron stamp made, upon which his name was engraved, (Nicolas) ; he made use of this to sign dismissions, letter and other papers, to which his signature was necessary. It was also remarked, that this custom was not rare among the Princes of Italy, and that the iron was called in Italian cachetto: it is known in Spain by the name of Stampilla ; it serves for royal dispatches; but it contains no proper

name, for in Spain, every thing is signed and expedited with these words, Yo el Rey—I the King ; and this formula always takes place, even when the dispatches are for Italy or the Low Countries. It was added, that the use of the stamp might be attended with the greatest danger, were it only because it rendered the King's name less sure and respectable; that it is true, this signature in France is mostly false; but at least that of the Secretaries is not so, that is the latter could ever be suspected, the unhappy subjects would not know to whom to complain, when they received orders, upon whose execution their fortunes, and even lives depended.

The Abbe de Dangeau advanced in one of these academical conferences, that in truth, Popes were the first and most accommodating people in [216] the world. Pius IV. by a bull in 1564, granted to the Bohemians the communion of two kinds: his successors have, at different times, canonised the usurpations by secular princes, the lands and possessions of ecclesiastics; but at length, added he, they are asked for so many, that it is impossible for them to consent any longer. They have opposed the marriage of Priests and Bishops ; they could not do otherwise. If this were agreed to every benefice with cure of souls, and others, would become hereditary ; and the clergy with small stipends, would bring disgrace upon ecclesiastical dignities, and finally upon religion itself.

It appears that the academy at the Luxembourg finished, because questions too delicate were proposed in it, and the academicians, being divided, disputed so warmly upon these objects, that they were exasperated, and at last separated.

I forgot to mention a remark I made in there memoirs, that the ministers of state, even the first of them, had not, by virtue of this title, a seat in parliament, and that they were never looked upon as great officers of the crown.

Charles VI. and Charles VII. were declared major in parliament without personally appearing there ; the first was declared so by the Duke of Anjou, his uncle, and the second by the simple fact.

The Abbe de Choisy left me a collection of bons mots, in which there are many known to all the world, but others more rare, singular and agreeable: I will give a specimen of them.

The Chevalier de la Ferti was young and inconsiderate; the king, who was kind to his relations, granted him five hundred crowns upon his cassette, saying to him, " Young man, I will encrease this sum every year in proportion [217] as you shall become more prudent." "Ah Sire," replied the Chevalier, " your Majesty does not know to what you engage yourself, I shall ruin you." Yet, notwithstanding this gasconade, the Chevalier continued his extravagance. The following is a ridiculous one. He was at Lyons, in a merchant's house, where they played at Pharo ; the bank was composed of Louis d'ors and crowns: he began to play upon his credit and favourable appearance, and risked immediately a thousand Louis, which he won he risked double, and lost ; he retired instantly, saying, "Parbluc, voila un coup impayable; " which, in fact, he never paid.

M. Morlau, first physician to the Duchess of Burgundy, going one day, I know not for what purpose, to the prince's with a sword, was jocose upon his adjustment, and said, " Monseigneur, do not you think I resemble Captain Spezz a ferro, of the Italian comedy ? It is impossible to resemble him less," answered the prince, " Spezz a ferro never killed any body."

The Marquis of Dangeau, well known to the Abbe de Choisy, and whom I have known myself, was at a famous courtier's, and one of the wits of the court of Lewis XI V. He was admitted into the Academie Francoise in 1668, and

died in 1721. It was not till after the death of the king that he dared to acknowledge he was not only the confidant of that monarch, in his amours, during his youth, but that he assisted him with his pen to write letters of gallantry to Madame de la Valliere. This good lady took infinite pains in answering them, and was, at length, obliged to get her themes corrected by this same Marquis of Dangeau. He took also upon himself to write poetry for the King ; and, fearing lest he should [218] make it too good, he did little honour to the monarch, who at length renounced both genuine and adoptive poetry. It is said, that Monsieur and Madame having one day disputed a question of gallantry, they both applied to the Marquis, who secretly wrote, for each of them, some verses upon the subject, and that the king, to whom they were shewn, judged those of Madame to be the best.

Every body has heard of the Memoirs of the Marquis of Dangeau; they are a manuscript journal of the court, from the year 1686 to 1720; I have read them all : it is true they are charged with much minutiae; but there are also many interesting anecdotes; if he did not write them day by day, he has, at least, revised them carefully, and he would not have suffered any thing absolutely false to escape him. We may say, that if they be not a true history of the court of France, for thirty-five years, they are good materials of which it may be composed.

The Abbe de Dangeau, brother to the Marquis, and, like him, of the Academie Francoise, was the intimate friend of the Abbe de Choisy. Dying a little before him, he left him three or four great collections of remarks of every kind, which came to my hands with the papers of the Abbe de Choisy ; and, in which there are, certainly, excellent things: but, as the writing is extremely bad, I am afraid I shall never have the satisfaction of extracting from them the precious matter they may contain.

The Abbe d'Aumont had taken a box at the comedy, and was waiting in it for the ladies of his company, when the

Marshal d'Albret arrived. From a motive of respect to this nobleman he was shewn into the box where the Abbe was, who [219] found himself obliged to give way to the Marshal. The Abbe withdrew much displeased, and said, grumblingly, between his teeth, " Look at the brave marshal, he has never taken any thing in his life but my box."

Cromwell sent his Excellency Lockart to France, with the title of ambassador, where he was received with all the honours due to his rank. One day the old Marshal Villeroy, governor to Lewis XIV. asking this Englishman why Cromwell, instead of taking the title of protector, had not got himself declared king. " Monsieur," replied Lockart, " we know the extent of the prerogatives of a king, and limit them accordingly, but we are ignorant of those of a protector." Lockart was right, new titles are necessary to new power.

At the time of the forced conversion of our southern provinces, which have been called dragonnades, the Marshal de Tesse lent a detachment of dragoons into a village, to force the inhabitants to conversion. The people, alarmed, wrote immediately to the Marshal , and, to avoid the pillage with which they were threatened, informed him, their intentions were to abjure their errors. M de Tesse ordered the captain to return with his detachment ; the latter, vexed to see so great a booty escape him, said, on his arrival, to the general, " Monseigneur, those rascals laugh at you ; they have not given us the time even to instruct them."

Gregory XIII. owed his elevation to the pontifical throne, principally, to the Cardinal Borromee, who had given him his vote, and procured him those of his friends, because he thought him a disinterested man. But as soon as the pope was installed, he began to enrich his family at [220] the expence of St. Peter, which obliged the Cardinal Borromee to say to him, " Holy father, had I known that, on being created pope, you would have held such a conduct, you

should neither have had my voice, nor those of my friends.—Good," said the pope, "did not the Holy Ghost know it?"

The Abbe de Boisrobert being one morning with the Cardinal de Richelieu, said several disagreeable things of a magistrate of the first order, and attributed to him much ridicule ; a little valet de chambre took it into his head to say to him, " Monsieur l'Abbe, take care of what you say ; I give you notice that I will inform M. *** of it, to whom I am greatly attached, because he is my relation.—Friend," replied the Abbe, "tell M.*** whatever you please ; on my part, I will inform him of your pretensions to be his relation, and he will be more vexed with you than with me."

The Queen, Christina, passing by, I know not what city in France, was harangued by a consul, who was a Calvinist; he was eloquent, and she hearkened to him with attention and pleasure : " But, Sir," said she, to the consul, " you have neither spoken of my abdication nor of my conversion to the Catholic faith.—Madame," replied he, "I undertook to pronounce your eulogium, and not to give your history."

Philip IV. having lost the kingdom of Portugal, Catalonia, and some other provinces, took it into his head to take the surname of Great ; the Duke of Medina-Celi said, "Our master is like a hole, which grows the bigger the more matter it loses."

[221] Madame B--- , of a very distinguished family in the magistracy, was witty, and perfectly understood the art of pleasantry; being in a very numerous company, somebody had the courage to say to her that her husband appeared to be of a weak constitution ; " Really," said she, " I have heard my mother-in-law say, that "M. M B .--- have, for more than two hundred years that they were known in the world, been impotent from father to son; this lady has,

however, brought forth a son, which is, at present, the last of the family."

Monsieur le Prince, ready to give battle, at Nerwinde, to the Imperialists, commanded by the General de Mercy, an excellent officer, perceived, after a rude cannonade, that the enemy made a false manoeuvre : " Ah ! " cried he, "Mercy is certainly killed." He fell upon the Germans and gained the victory. What he conjectured was true. It was upon the tomb of this general that the following honourable epitaph was engraved : Siste, viator, beroem calcas : Stop, traveller, thou treadest upon a hero.

Monsieur le Prince was one day in his coach with a very tiresome fellow, who teased him with stupifying stories—" Sir," said he to him "either do not put me to sleep, or let me sleep on quietly."

The same Monsieur le Prince went frequently to the houses of the ministers of state, and seemed to pay his court to them : " What do you want with those people, said the Count de Grammont to him; do you wish to become a prince of the blood ?"

M. de Turenne being prepared for a battle, charged the young Duke de Choiseul, son of the Marechal Dupleffis Praslin, to take possession of [222] a post which he pointed out to him; but the young officer neglected to make sure of it, thinking he had no opposition to fear : " Sir, Sir," said the general to him, "I beg of you to follow my directions; it was for want of such a precaution " that I was beat at Rhetel by the Marshal your father."

The Abbe de Choisy pretended to the possession of an anecdote upon the manner in which Messieurs de Crussel, d'Uzez, were made dukes and peers in 1572, the year of the affair of St. Bartholomew. Catherine of Medicis, wished to gain over, or rather deceive the Admiral de Coligni ; she

offered him the dignity of duke and peer he refuted it, that he might not render himself suspected by the Huguenot party. But, as he was greatly in love with the Countess d'Uzez, he allied the dukedom for her husband, and obtained it. The new Duke d'Uzez was promoted and received, and a short time afterwards the Admiral was massacred.

The second volume left by me the Abbe de Choisy, contains the six first books of the work printed under the titre of *Memoires pour servir a l'Histoire de Louis XIV* but I have found at the end of the volume, a conversation between the Abbe and the Marquis de Canillac, upon the state of the court in 1720, which the Abby d'Olivet dared not publish. The Marquis was a man of great wit, favoured by the regent, who had made him a member of the council of the regency, and of that of foreign affairs : there are some good anecdotes in this conversation, a few of which I shall relate. The Marquis de Canillac pretended that the regent was not naturally of a bad disposition, but loved what was singular and extraordinary ; that he was systematical, which made him adopt the system of M. Law.

[223] It is generally agreed, that is this system had been well understood, and confined within proper bounds, it would have saved the kingdom : but it was carried much too far : M. Law himself had not understanding enough ; he was, like the regent, singular and systematical, but did not know how far to carry his ideas : when he was controller-general he committed one fault upon another. He thought himself an adept, and, in fact, I have been assured by the people of reputation, who knew him at Venice, that he possessed the never failing means, of winning at play, whatever sums of money he pleased. But it requires more art to enrich a state than an individual. The regent said one day to the Marquis de Canillac, that the bank, being in discredit, a new one was necessary, "You are mistaken, Monseigneur," answered the Marquis "you once had one, but you have let it escape; and never will be able to find it again."

I will add, that when the regent died, the people appeared so furious and desperate, at the injury which the number of illusive bank-notes had done to many fortunes, that it was necessary to double the guard to conduct his body to Saint Denis ; but when the Parisians had felt a little the administration of Monsieur le Due, and the brothers, at Paris, they agreed that the regent was to be regretted.

The third volume of manuscripts of the Abbe de Choisy, contains the history of the pretended Countess of Barres. This scandalous book has not been entirely printed, there are five books in my manuscript, three of which only have been given to the public ; but I will enter into no detail upon this work, which does no honour to my relation and old friend.

[224] It will easily be supposed I have all the works the Abbe ever wrote, and that he made me a present of them upon a fine paper and on a good letter. I will give my sentiments in a few words upon each, for they are very numerous.

The Abbe de Choisy did not begin to write till he had entirely quitted the ridiculous and singular life he had led ; not even until some time afterwards. He returned to Paris, and, wearing the dress of his profession, was like women who have been gallant and coquettish, and are become old ; they have the choice of play, intrigues, wit and devotion. The Abbe de Choisy took up all of these , one after another. At first he played, and lost the greatest part of his fortune; his benefices were all he had left. He possessed, among other's, the abbey of Saint Seine, to which he retired; and became acquainted there with the famous Bussy Rabutin, exiled to his estate in Burgundy, who advised him to leave off play and become an author. Bussy perceived the Abbe had information and style sufficient to compose books of devotion, written in art agreeable manner, which would be read by men of the world, to whom there kind of books are commonly tiresome. The

Abbe benefited by this advice, but not until some years afterward. In the mean time he came to Paris, and became very intimate with the Cardinal de Bouillon, who, in the moment of departure for Rome, where he was going to assist at the Conclave of 1676, proposed to the Abbe to accompany him in quality of conclavist, to which he contented. He has frequently related to me very interesting details of this Conclave, and which prove that the Italian cardinals are great adepts in petty intrigues. The Abbe assured me that a severe illness which he had in 1683, made him resolve to change his [225] conduct, and that since that time his devotion had been sincere. It was soon after this illness that he composed, in concert with his friend, the Abbe de Dangeau, his first work, which was printed in 1685. It consists of four dialogues, upon the Immortality of the Soul ; the Existence of God; upon Providence ; and, lastly, upon Religion. I will say nothing about this book, which treats of such serious matters : I avow, without reserve, that it fatigued me, although ,well written. The year following, 1686, he was guilty of what may be called his last extravagance, his voyage to Siam. All the world know the journal he printed of it : some passages are dry, and others enlivened by strokes of wit and agreeable details. In general, the epocha of the arrival of the Siamese in France, and that of the French ambassadors at Siam, are capable of furnishing many philosophical reflections ; it was a political comedy, such as there were many in the reign of Lewis XIV. they appear ridiculous at present, but they contributed to the glory of the monarch, and that of the nation, inseparable from each other. The Abbe de Choisy amused himself, for some time after his return, and entertained the court and city, with the recital of his great voyage : his printed relation made the author fully known, and opened to him, in 1697, the doors of l'Academie Francoise. I have remarked, in the discourse pronounced at his reception, two thoughts, the first of which appear to me ridiculous, and the second a very fine and just one. He says that the new academicians ought to act like the cardinals, who remain some time with their mouths shut, till, in a consistory, the Pope opens them with ceremony, that is to say, permits them to speak. This is a proof that members were not then received into the academy as [226] soon as they were elected. The other

passage in the Abbe's discourse is, that there was, between Lewis XIV. and the academy, an intercourse, which naturally led both to immortality. Lewis XIV. granted it his protection, and the academy augmented his glory.

To speak successively on what occasions the Abbe de Choisy distinguished himself as an academician, I must begin by observing that in 1704, Academie Francoise, willing to confer an honour upon M. Bossuet, which few others have received ; the same day that the Abbe, since Cardinal, de Pignac was received at the academy, in the place of the illustrious M. Bossuet, Bishop of Meaux, independently of the eulogium which his successor, and the director made of him, the Abbe de Choisy was desired to compose one of singular merit : this eulogium took up the remainder of the sitting. The subject was fine, but I found nothing worthy of it in the Abbe's discourse.

The last year of his life, the Abbe received the Abbe d'Olivet; his discourse was short and simple; the good man was worn down, but he imposed upon himself this talk, because the Abbe d'Olivet was his friend. I know not if it be on this account he took from me his memoirs, and had them printed in Holland.

The following. year, 1724, the Abbe de Choisy died; his successor, M. Portal, first president, and M. de Valincourt, director, described him such as he was in the latter part of his life, amiable in society, easy in intercourse, gentle in manners, possessed of natural grace, and an insinuating lively turn, officious, a faithful friend, brilliant, and full of sallies in conversation, although he was modest, and appeared to forget himself in favour of others : his gaiety was mild and tranquil, [227] of which he bore the character in his features. With respect to his merit, as his writings are of several kinds, he has been most approved of as an historian, and it is, in fact, in what he appears to the greatest advantage. He published, in 1668, an interpretation of the Psalms; wherein were pointed out the remarkably differences between the Hebrew text and the

Vulgate ; it was preceded by the life of David, in which he compared this monarch to Lewis XIV. The book had no success ; but the Life of David pleased, not only on account of its being well written, but because it was the fashion of the times to praise Lewis XIV. it was therefore reprinted singly, and soon followed by the life of Solomon, written in the same style of flattery, and, which was still more admired, especially the passage wherein he represents Solomon giving audience to the ambassadors of the Indian king.

Des pensees Chretiennes, which he published in 1690, had little success ; it did not, however, prevent his giving, in 1692, a translation of the Imitation of Jesus Christ, of which I have already spoken. Discouraged by the criticisms on this work, he confined himself to writing history, in which, in my opinion, he succeeded perfectly; for, if his style does not always appear noble enough for the subject of which he treats, it is, at least agreeable and pure, and is read with satisfaction.

The books of the Abbe de Choisy, which I advise my friends to read, and especially the ladies with whom I am acquainted, are two or three volumes D'Histoires de Pieté et de Morale, which he acknowledges to have written in opposition to the Petits Contes de Fees, greatly in vogue towards the end of the last century. Great courage is necessary thus to oppose history to fable, so delightful to the imagination of women, and, perhaps of [228] men also. Yet it must be acknowledged, that the Abbe did his best, and transferred the styles of Madame de la Fayette, and Madame d'Aunoy, into moral and edifying stories. There are twenty-one in number, and, if they be not all really excellent, they are delightful to read, and not difficult to procure.

Their success encouraged the Abbe to give, in 1695, Les Vies de Philippe de Valois, du Roi Jean, de Charles V. de Charles VI. and, finally, that of Saint Lewis. They were much approved of at Court, and put into the hands of the

royal children, as infinitely proper to give them instruction. Effectively, nothing is more instructive than history, written with useful views, with good sense, and mixed with moral reflections, given in a few words, and rising naturally from facts.

The Abbe is not curious in investigating singular and extraordinary discoveries, as producing no utility, nor even exciting admiration ; they are scarce known at present, perhaps, because they were neglected ; and from which no rules of conduct can be prescribed, no conclusions drawn, to know the human heart, nor even the manners of the early ages ; because they are, for the most part, extraordinary and isolated circumstances ; and, that the knowledge of the manners of a nation can only result from an union of a great number of facts.

At length the Abbe undertook his history of the Church, although, those of M. de Tillemont, and the Abbe de Fleury, were already begun ; but these three authors could scarcely agree. M. de Tillemont overcharged this work with an erudition which, on one hand made it valuable, but on the other, not proper for the common class of readers; moreover he has treated of the six first ages [229] of the church. That of the Abbe de Fleury began to appear in 1691, but it was easy to discover that, although excellent, and a work of a most sensible and methodical author, it took such a turn as to prevent its being finished in a reasonable time. That of the Abbe de Choisy was, on the contrary, so abridged, as to give hopes of its being soon terminated ; and, in effect, although he was sixty when the first volume appeared, in 1703, the last volume was published in 1723, and the history brought down to 1715. This work is by no means overcharged with erudition : on the contrary the author has been too deficient in that respect, accused of quoting no authorities, and of having, under pretence of giving the history of the Church, written that of the Christian world, from the birth of Jesus Christ.

But he wished his history to be within the capacity of every

body, and he has certainly fulfilled his object ; he has drawn all his information from the best sources, because the facts he has given are generally known. It was not possible for him to inform his readers of the progress of religion, and of the contests it was the cause of, without giving the history of the whole Christian world. He has not entered into a detail of controversies, because this would certainly have been fatiguing ; but he has never failed to explain, very clearly, in what heresies consisted; from whence they sprung; what great events they have produced, and when they were terminated. The Abbe had very delicate points to treat of ; such as the crusades, the councils of Constance and Bale, and the religious wars in France ; all which he got over with much wisdom and address. All his idle observations are confined to the last volume : but on the other hand, he has used, much art in speaking of Jansenism. [230] This volume contains his voyage to Siam. In fact, the History of the Church, by the Abbe de Choisy, is sufficiently good, very agreeable, and, perhaps, the best for women to read. I have recommended the perusal of it to most of the ladies of my acquaintance, for which they have thanked me, as well as for that, of the Lives of the Five Kings of France, of which I have spoken. , The Abbe wrote also, in 1706, the Life of Madame de Miramion : this lady was his cousin-german, which was a good reason for his writing her life, but not equally so for its being read by the public.

ESSAY XLII.

On the Erudition, fine Taste, and Elegance of Cardinal Polignac.

I see, sometimes the Cardinal de Polignac, and he always inspires me with the same sentiments of admiration and respect. He appears to me to be the last great prelate of the Gallic church, who professes eloquence in the Latin as well the French language, and whose erudition is very extensive. [231] He, alone, among the honorary members

of the Academy of Belles Lettres, understands and speaks the language of the learned of which this academy is composed ; he expresses himself upon: matters of erudition, with a grace and dignity, proper and peculiar to himself. It may be remembered that M. Bossuet, whom the Cardinal, at that time Abbe de Polignac, replaced in 1704; at the Academy Francoise, was the last prelate who had a distinguished rank among the theologians and polemical writers : The conversation of the Cardinal is equally brilliant and inactive: he knows something of every subject, and relates with grace and perspicuity every thing he knows : he speaks upon the sciences, and upon matters of erudition, as Fontenelle wrote his worlds, in reducing the most abstracted matters to the capacity of the vulgar; and renders them in terms which men of education and refinement use in treating. familiar subjects of ordinary conversation.

Nobody relates more elegantly than the Cardinal, and without entreaty ; but, in the most simple narratives, wherein erudition would be insipid from the mouth of another, it finds graces in his, from the aid of his person and elegant pronounciation. Age has deprived him of some of these advantages, but he preserves still enough of them, especially when we call to mind the many great occasions in which his graces and natural talents have shone. My uncle, the Bishop of Blois, who was nearly his contemporary, has frequently spoken to me of his younger days. Never was a course of study made with more reputation than his : not only his themes and compositions were excellent, but he had time and facility to assist his fellow -students, or, rather, to do their duty for them ; so much so, that the four pieces which [232] gained the two premiums and the accents, in the college of Harcourt, where he studied, were all composed by him. When he was engaged in philosophy, at the same college, he would maintain, in his public theses, the system of Descartes, which it was then found difficult to establish : he acquitted himself with great reputation, and confounded all the partisans of old opinions. Nevertheless, the ancient doors of the university having taken it ill that he should have combated Aristotle, and not having been willing to give a

degree to the enemy of the preceptor of Alexander, he consented to maintain another theses, in which he read his recantation, and made Aristotle triumph over the Cartesians themselves.

No sooner was he received doctor in theology, than the Cardinal de Bouillon took him to Rome, to the conclave of 1680, wherein the Pope, Alexander VIII. was elected. As soon as the Abbe de Polignac was known in this capital of the Christian world, which was then the centre of the most profound erudition and refined policy he was generally loved and esteemed. The French cardinals and ambassador judged him the most proper person to make the Pope hearken to reason upon the articles of the famous assembly of the clergy of France in 1682. It was difficult to persuade the court of Rome to swallow this pill ; yet the wit and eloquence of the Abbe de Polignac brought it about : he was charged to carry the news of it to France, and had, on this occasion, a private audience of Lewis XIV. who said of him, in French, what the Pope, Alexander III. had said in Italian : This young man has the art of persuading you to believe every thing pleases ; whilst he appears at first to be of your opinion, he is artfully maintaining a contrary one, but he gains his end with so much address, that he finishes always by convincing you he is right. [233] He had not yet put the finishing stroke to this great affair before the Pope recalled him to Rome. He assisted again at the conclave wherein Innocent XII. was elected, and he returned to France the following year, 1692.

About two years afterwards the king named him ambassador to Poland, a very delicate appointment, from the particular circumstances at that period. John Sobieski was in a very declining state of health ; Lewis XIV. wished not only to preserve some credit in Poland, but to give, for a successor to the declining king, a prince detected to France. The Prince of Conti had offered himself, and Lewis XIV. charged secretly till Abbe de Polignac to endeavour to get him elected, notwithstanding the opposition to the Queen Dowager, who was a French

woman, but who with much reason, favoured her children, in spite of all contrary cabals. The Abbe, keeping his instructions very secret, arrived at the court of Sobieski a year before his death ; he delighted all the Polanders by the facility with which he spoke Latin; he might have been taken for an envoy from the court of Augustus, if he had not been heard to speak French to the Queen, who was seduced by his wit and appearance; but she could not abandon, on his account, the interest of her family. Sobieski died, and the general diet assembled to chuse a successor. The eloquence of the Abbe de Polignac, the promises and hopes with which he allured the Polanders, were, at first, attended with so much success, that a great part of the nation, headed by the primate, proclaimed the Prince of Conti ; but in the same moment, the sums which the Elector of Saxony had distributed, caused a double election, in which this German prince was chosen. Both [234] pretending to the crown, they both arrived to support their party, and continued to employ the means which had, at first, been successful; but those of the Elector were more effectual and solid. He had money and even troops; the Prince of Conti, on the contrary, after having received kingly honours at the court of France, went on board a French vessel at Dantzick, where he stayed six weeks, but without any other means of proving the legality of his election, than the good face and eloquence of the Abbe de Polignac. These resources were soon exhausted; the Prince of Conti; and even the Abbe, were obliged to return to France.

Although the court of France was too just and well informed not to perceive that it, was not the fault of the ambassador if his mission was not crowned with a more brilliant success, he was, notwithstanding, exiled from Versailles for four years. He employed this time, usefully, to encrease his mass of knowledge, which was, already very great. Finally, in 1702, he was sent to Rome in quality of Auditor of the Rota.* [* The name of an ecclesiastical court at Rome, composed of twelve prelates, one of whom must be a German, another a Frenchman, and two of them Spaniards ; the other eight are Italians, three of whom

must be Romans, and the remaining five, a Bolongnese, a Ferraran, a Milanese, a Venetian, and a Tuscan.

This is one of the most August tribunals in Rome, and takes cognizance, by appeal, of all suits in the territory of the church ; as also, of all matters beneficiary and patrimonial. TRANSLATOR.] He now found new opportunities of distinguishing himself, and gaining admiration, for which he was recompensed by a nomination to the Cardinalship, by James, King of England.

[235] He was upon the point of enjoying the honours of his new rank, when he was recalled to France on account of some very critical circumstances. He was obliged, in 1710, to go with the Marshal d'Huxelles to Gertrudenberg, charged by Lewis XIV. to propose to the enemies of this monarch, his submission to the most humiliating conditions, in order to terminate the war. Unhappily all the wit and eloquence of the future cardinal was there ineffectual. At length, after two years were elapsed, he was named plenipotentiary to the famous congress of Utrecht ; it must be remarked that he was at that time named, at Rome, cardinal in petto, and, though all the people knew who he was, he did not appear as an ecclesiastic, either in dress or title : his dress was secular, and he was called the Comte de Polignac. It was in this situation of an incognito, that he was, present at all the negotiations of Utrecht, to the moment of signing the treaty; he then declared it was not possible for him to sign the exclusion of a monarch from his throne, to whom he was indebted for the cardinal's hat; he withdrew, and came to enjoy, at the court of France, the honours of the cardinalship.

The new political system which was adopted, after the death of Lewis XIV. exiled him to his Abbey of Anchin, in Flanders. These good Flemish monks trembled to see him arrive in their monastery ; but they were afflicted even to despair when he left them, after the death of the Cardinal

Dubois and of the Regent. They were not capable of appreciating his wit, nor of understanding his erudition ; but they had found him mild and amiable, and so far from plundering them, he embellished their church, and reestablished their house.

[236] He was obliged to return to Rome at the death of Clement XI. and he assisted at the conclaves wherein Innocent XIII. Benedict XIII. and Clement XII. were elected. During the two first pontificates he was charged with the affairs of France at that court. This city was ever the finest theatre of his glory: one would have thought its ancient grandeur entered with him into the capital. On his part, when he returned, he appeared charged with the spoils of Rome, subdued by his wit and eloquence; and it may literally be said, that, in his last journey, he transported a part of ancient Rome to Paris, by placing in his hotel a collection of antique statues and monuments taken from the palaces of the first emperors.

I cannot see the Cardinal de Polignac without recollecting all he has done and learned for sixty years past; I remain, as it were, in ecstasy, when near him, and in the greatest admiration of every thing he says. It is observed that his manner is become old as well as his person; it is true that his tone has outlived the mode. But is it not because we have absolutely lost the habitude of hearing the language of science and erudition, that the Cardinal begins to be tiresome to us? for, otherwise, nobody treats these matters with less pedantry than he does : if he quotes, it is always a-propos, because, having a prodigious memory, it furnishes him with what is necessary to support conversation in every point, let the subject be what it may. For my part, who have finished my studies, but who have yet a great deal to learn, I declare I never received more agreeable lessons than those he gives in conversation.

[237] Being a good deal taken up about the Cardinal, I have just read his discourse of admission at the Academy Francoise, in 1704. Nothing can be more elegant and

noble; and this immense collection, begun almost an hundred years ago, contains no discourse equal to his: it is the most perfect model for those who have a like talk to fulfil, observing always that the academician, whom they succeed, and the circumstances in which this kingdom is, at the time they speak, may infinitely increase the difficulties of it. The Abbe de Polignac had difficulties to encounter, but he got over them in much a manner as gained him universal applause ; and, had it been customary at that time, the academy would have rung with their plaudits.

The Cardinal has a pupil and friend, thirty years younger than himself, who, consequently, cannot be reproached with having manners different from the fashion : this is the Abbe de Rothelin. He has a good deal of wit, a strong memory, and much knowledge, but not so extensive as that of the Cardinal ; he spent with him several years at Rome, and has been twice his conclavist. There he saw what honour erudition conferred on the Cardinal ; he endeavoured to tread in his steps, and is become, like him, a member of the Academy Françoise, an honorary of that, des Inscriptions and des Belles Lettres. But his eloquence is neither so natural or noble, as that of his master. He has more vivacity in conversation, which sparkles with more strokes of wit; he has, perhaps, received more from nature than the Cardinal, but he does not know how to employ so well what was acquired from others, nor to reap the fruit of his studies.

[238] The Cardinal has undertaken a Latin poem, which he intitles Anti-Lucretius, and is a refutation of the system of materialists. He recites passages from it to persons whom he thinks capable of judging of their merit; and his eminence has done me the honour to repeat several of them.

They are admirable paintings and descriptions. If one knows the Latin ever so little, and remembers the authors of the Augustan age, he would imagine that he read them

over again by hearing these passages. But a poem against Lucretius, of equal length with the original, and divided into nine books, requires the life of a man to carry it to perfection. The Cardinal began too late, and cannot flatter himself with the hope of living to finish it. It is said he means to charge the Abbe de Rothelin with this task, who, from vanity, will not refuse it, and will think it an honour to put the work of his respectable friend in a state to appear before the public. But, to this end, the aid of some able professor of the university will be necessary ; the Abbe will never accomplish it of himself. Moreover, when the Anti-Lucretius appears, it will undoubtedly do honour to the Cardinal's abilities, as well as the Abbe's, and even those persons who shall have assisted him in finishing it. But who, at present, will read a Latin poem, entirely philosophical, of five or six thousand lines ? Scarcely would a translation of it, in prose or verse, be turned over. Greek is entirely forgotten; it is to be feared the Latin will soon be so, and that the Cardinal de Polignac, the Abbe de Rothelin, and a certain M. Le Beau, coming up in the university, will be called the last of the Romans. Even the Jesuits begin to neglect Latin: they find it more easy to [239] write in French ; this gains them more honour and profit.

The figure of the Cardinal and that of the Abbe are still more different than their turn of mind. That of the first is elegant and noble, and announces what he is, and has been. If we were to paint from idea a great prelate, a learned cardinal, a wise and worthy ambassador, a famous Roman orator, we should seize the features of the Cardinal de Polignac. The Abbe de Rothelin has, on the contrary, a fine and sensible countenance, but appears to have delicate lungs ; his figure is agreeable, but quite modern ; that of the Cardinal is, at present, a beautiful and precious antique.

On Abbe Rothelin's extravagant Taste for Medals and Books.

The Abbe de Rothelin's curiosity is of two kinds, which belong equally to erudition, medals and books. He has, of the first, a considerable collection of all sorts and forms. His silver medals are, as I have been told, eight thousand in number, to which must be added, three hundred medallions [240] of emperors, and four hundred of Grecian cities. His series of large and smaller medals, in bronze, are upwards of nine thousand. He began this collection at Rome, under the inspection of the Cardinal de Polignac. His eminence having, on his part, collected some, the Abbe hopes he will leave them to him, and that, by this means, his cabinet will become the finest and most precious ever in the possession of an individual in France. The Abbe will not be at all insensible of the possession of so rich a literary domain; for, although a man of quality, sufficiently wealthy, amiable, and a good companion, he is accused of loving medals to such a degree, when he finds one carelessly laid, and is unobserved by the proprietor, he does not hesitate to put it in his pocket, and, afterwards place it in his cabinet : except in this he is by no means knavish. He is rather too poignant and indiscriminate in raillery: the Cardinal's disposition was equally remote from satire or scandal.

The Abbe de Rothelin's other taste, is in books. His literary collection begins to be very considerable ; he shews it willingly, and, with ostentation, and makes curious remarks on some printed works which he alone possesses : he explains in what their merit consists; the rarity and singularity by which they are distinguished. As he commonly speaks to people less learned than himself, they believe all he says, and congratulate him upon the possession of such a precious treasure, which will be sold for a great price after his death. Sensible people think there is a little quackery in this, and I am of the same opinion. In a taste for books we must distinguish masterpieces in composition, the most splendid editions, and [241] elegance of types. Their merit is visible, and we

cannot refuse them a place in a rich library, especially when we are assured that the editions are as correct as they are handsome.

It may therefore be conceived that the first books printed in any language are, sought after like so many historical monuments of the arts and printing ; but it seems to me that otherwise the value of a library should consist in the intrinsic merit of the books, and in the utility they may be of to those who possess them. People who are, or wish to become well-informed, ought to have a great number of books of every kind ; those of less pretensions, ought to confine themselves to books proper to their situation, and such as are useful to their daily amusement and instruction. To wish to go further is folly and abuse ; yet I think this folly seems pretty general. The Abbe de Rothelin inspired with it the Comte de Hoym, minister of the king of Poland, Elector of Saxony, at the court of France, and who has been persuaded that, although unlearned, he ought to have the scarcest books of every kind, and to get them magnificently bound. M. de Boze, perpetual secretary to the Academy des Belles Lettres, has also begun to collect books of erudition ; he has had, and will continue to have, the power of persuading the illiterate rich to make the same acquisition, without their knowing the reasons that induce them. The Abbe de Rothelin and M. de Boze can, at least , tell the kind of merit for which they fought after such or such a book. The reasons are, sometimes, frivolous enough ; but, however, they know them ; instead of which, those into whose hands these books may hereafter fall, will buy them dear, for the sole reason that their first possessor esteemed them highly.

[242] It is diverting to imagine that there will come a time when people, who know not a word of Latin, will give an exorbitant price for books written in that language ; that they will even give an hundred pistoles for a book, because it is honoured in the catalogue with the epithets scarce and singular, and, that a great price has been offered for it in a preceding tale.

I met one day with one of these bibliomanes, who had just paid a great price for a scarce book : " Apparently, Sir," said I to him, "it is your intention to get this book reprinted." " By no means," answered he, " it would then be no longer scarce, and thereby lose its value ; moreover, I know not if it be worth while." " Ah, Sir," replied I, " if it deserves not to be reprinted, how can it be worth the price you have given ?"

In speaking of the Abbe de Rothelin, I find myself insensibly engaged in treating of the mania of books. I know not is what I have just remarked may, in time, be of use to some of my friends, or to people for whom I ought to be most interested ; be this as it may, I have given my opinion freely, let those who please benefit by it.

[243] ESSAY XLIV.

On the singular Memory and Erudition of Abbe Longuerue, and other Literary Anecdotes.

I was, for several years, acquainted with a man, much less amiable than the Cardinal de Polignac, but famous for his immense erudition, founded upon his memory, which was, in truth, astonishing ; this was the Abbe de Longuerus: he died in 1732, upwards of eighty years of age. In his childhood he appeared a prodigy. Lewis XIV. passing by Charleville, the Abbe's country, wished to see and hear him. He seemed to know every thing at an age when other children know scarcely any thing. He maintained his reputation to the end of his life. Coming early to Paris; he was consulted as an oracle on matters of every kind. Although esteemed a man of much sense, he was never of any academy, but received many compliments upon his memory. I asked him how he managed to arrange; and retain in his head, every thing that entered it; and to recollect every thing when wanted. " Sir," answered he, "the elements of every science must be learned whilst we

are young; the first principles of every language, the abc, as I may say, of every kind of knowledge : this is not difficult in youth, as so much the less so, as it is not necessary to penetrate [244] far, and that simple notions are sufficient : when once they are acquired every thing we read places itself where it ought to be : the sum of acquired knowledge insensibly becomes accumulated and perfectly distributed. Therefore," added the Abbe, "I have studied nothing, methodically, almost these fifty years ; but I read sometimes one book, sometimes another, and those in preference which may teach me something new, or recall to my mind that which cannot be too much inculcated. It is in this manner I am become possessed of the nomenclature of all my books : my local memory indicates to me the place in my cabinet, or apartment, where they are ; I am therefore sure, in case of need, to give clear directions to those I send to seek them ; they bring them to me, and, in this, I find always the proof of what I have advanced of my memory."

The Abbe de Longuerue has, however, found that the memory must not be too much relied upon: he wished to make an exertion of it, in which he did not quite succeed. In 1718, it was argued with him that nothing was more difficult than to give an historical description of France, and which should be neither long nor uninteresting; he pretended to be capable of doing it from memory, without consulting any book, but entirely by the aid of some charts, which he was to have before his eyes; and, that he would call to mind the origin and history of each province, city, and principal place, and the distinguished houses of the, kingdom. He began to dictate this description to the Abbe Alary, who was then a little boy, the son of an apothecary, and thought himself very happy to write under his direction : the work appeared in 1719, a volume in folio. He read [245] fragments of it in manuscript and printed detached sheets, to several people, who could not cease admiring how such profound researches could have come, as from their source, without the least difficulty to him. But as soon as a few whole copies were published, it appeared that correct works were not to be composed in this manner ; many notable errors were found in his

history, besides bold and hazarded opinions, not sufficiently established.-- The Abbe was obliged to take out many leaves, which were faulty, and put in others more perfect; this greatly encreased the expences of his edition. I must remark, that copies, wherein these corrections have not been made, are now sought after, and God knows why; for the only difference is, that some are faulty, and others corrected. Notwithstanding all this, the Description of France, by the Abbe de Longuerue, is a good and useful book ; it is an history of France by provinces, and, consequently, written upon an entire new plan. The manner in which all the great fiefs of the crown were formed is related therein, when, and how they became subject to the king's authority, and finally united to his domain.

The Abbe de Longuerue wrote two histories, one of the Cardinal de Richelieu, the other of the Cardinal Mazarine, with two descriptions of their administration. These two fragments remain in manuscript; what they contain most curious are some anecdotes, which the Abbe learned from people who had lived, and been employed under these ministers. The Abbe frequently repeated them to me, several of which I wrote down. I have also made other notes from what he communicated ; for, in returning from my visits to him, I always found something worth remembering and [246] committing to paper. Some of my notes are as follow :

The Abbe pretended that our language had made no real progress but for fifty years of the seventeenth century, from the year 1630 to 1680. It was, however, in this interval that L'Academie Francoise was established, the members of which applied themselves, at first, very usefully, to purify the language. What old expressions it has lost, said the Abbe, ought not to be regretted, although some of them were descriptive and natural, but harsh and ill-sounding; those substituted for them, are more soft, and render equally well the thought. But, since the year 1680, which may be looked upon as the best brilliant epocha of the age of Lewis XIV. what words have we added to the

dictionary, except a few, borrowed from the arts, and which are frequently ill applied, and taken in a bad sense ? The Abbe thought the style had gained no more, since that epocha, than words; but, in this, I do not think he judged right.

The History of Don Carlos, so well written, by the Abbe de St. Real, is certainly romantic.—The Abbe de Longuerue knew a Spanish book, which demonstrated that it was quite the work of fancy ; this opinion is, however, founded upon a passage of the history of M. de Thou : but this historian is as ignorant of what passed out of the kingdom, even in his own time, as he is worthy of belief upon all that happened in France, during the sixteenth century, because he was himself a witness to part of it, and that his father had a great share in the affairs immediately preceding. There were then no Gazettes, and few ambassadors residing in the different courts, who kept up a regular correspondence. M. de Thou was not in a situation to discover [247] the truth of reports which were spread in the kingdom, particularly those relative to the Spaniards, which always appeared to us suspicious, as propagated by our natural enemies.

Messieurs de Bouillons had got their genealogy drawn up and printed, with great pomp and magnificence ; they had already distributed several copies of it at court : when it was spoken of at the king's supper, " Sire," said the Prince de Conde, " if we believe this genealogy, Messieurs de Bouillons are more noble than we are ; for they make themselves descended from the first Dukes of Aquitaine, who were sovereigns, whilst the grandfather of Hugh Capet was but a simple individual ; but, after all," added the Prince de Conde, " it is not for us to tell them what we think of it ; I am but a younger brother : it is your duty, Sire, who are the elder." This reflection did not fall to the ground. The next day, the king informing himself of this genealogy, suppressed it, and forbade the sale, which greatly mortified Messieurs de Bouillons.

The Abbe de Longuerue thought he was certain that the Dutch offered, in 1632, to Lewis XIV. in order to appease him, the cession of every thing on this side the Rhine, and which is called Dutch Flanders and Dutch Brabant, and to preserve no thing more than their seven provinces. It was M. de Louvois, and a vain idea of glory, which disposed Lewis XIV. not to be contented with the offer. He was very wrong, and reduced, injudiciously, to the eve of ruin, the unhappy republic of Holland, which it was his interest to preserve. By securing to himself the proposed barrier, the king would have taken the ten remaining provinces, and joined them to France, which would have been, to make use of a popular expression, [248] giving the finest possible form to his meadow.--Upon this the Abbe said that France had three acquisitions only to make; all belonging to her ancient possessions, and wishing to do more was a folly. These acquisitions, were, first the Low Countries, which we ought always to flatter ourselves the House of Austria will some day cede to us to round her own meadow on the opposite side.

Secondly, Savoy, which we may also hope to obtain, in an agreeable manner, by encreasing the possessions of the Duke, on the side of Italy, where we risk nothing in procuring them for him, and putting it out of his power to penetrate into the kingdom. Thirdly, Lorraine, which the Abbe was persuaded we might have whenever we pleased. He did not count Avignon. among the acquisitions to be made ; for, said he, the Pope is no more master there than the Bishop of Strasburg is in Alsace. However, the Abbe judged more according to his own opinion, than that of wise Politicians, that distant acquisitions and possessions were improper for us. He told me he had known a man who demonstrated to Colbert, that it was a folly for France to have great possessions in America, and particularly in the East-Indies; that it was necessary to leave the English; who have, as we may say, but a foot of land in Europe, to make establishments in the new world; and to the Dutch, who are nearly in the same situation, to make conquests in Asia : that, after all, if we had, at second- hand only; what is brought from those countries, we should not be the

poorer, because France would find within herself, not only every thing of the first necessity, but still the means of employing all the arts which support epicureanism and luxury, and bring so much money into the kingdom. M. de Colbert, said the Abbe, fell into a great passion [249] on with the man who had spoken to him so freely,; and would never see him again; but, becoming angry if not giving an answer.

The Cardinal de Richelieu was not a learned man, but he knew well how to do without being so : it is sufficient for a minister to encourage and protect the sciences ; he is not obliged to possess, nor even cultivate any of them; but what is extraordinary, the Cardinal thought no more of science than of the learned. He had studied theology a little in his youth, because, being destined to the church, it was necessary to him; and, to gain ecclesiastical preferment, it was necessary to be able to maintain a thesis against the Calvinists; the Cardinal had therefore composed, or, at least, had assisted in the composition, of some works of this kind, which he got printed with much pomp and magnificence, at the Royal printing office. He was at the expense of casting Hebrew, Chaldean, Syrian and Arabic characters, to make a Polyglot Bible, in the Manner of that which did so much honour to the Cardinal Ximenes ; but he understood; no language but the French and the Latin; scarcely had he read our profane authors : he was ignorant of history, had, no knowledge of antiquity, and knew, nothing at all of natural philosophy nor mathematics; on which account he never recompensed those who applied themselves to the study of these sciences. He let Andre Duchene, who was, certainly the best compiler of history, and who lived during the administration, or, rather the reign, of the Cardinal, die for want. Neither the accurate sciences, nor those of nature made any progress during his time. He encouraged, the arts, but it was to make them serve his luxury. He established an academy of grammar, eloquence, [250] and poetry, in which he has perhaps done a greater service to the nation than he thought at first; he did this because he loved poetry, and pretended to write it. Neither study nor knowledge is necessary for this ; genius alone is sufficient;

it must be acknowledged the Cardinal de Richelieu was not wanting in it, and it was easy for him to supply the want of habitude in this kind of composition, because he had poets at the court, who wished for nothing better than to put rhyme and measure to his thoughts.

M. Colbert thought very differently : he certainly was not more instructed, perhaps even less than the Cardinal ; but he had zeal enough to encourage all the arts, sciences, and every kind of talent; he looked upon them as a source of honour for his king, and even of profit to France. Fortunately Lewis XIV. was of the same opinion; and, although more ignorant than his minister, he had more taste, and was more difficult to deceive than Colbert. When people's reputation could reach his ears, he never failed to recompense them, according to their merit. M. Colbert, incapable of judging for himself, in an infinity of circumstances, chose guides upon whose advice he formed his opinions; but his oracles were not always pure and impartial : in matters of erudition the Abbe Gallois Chapelain was his guide in poetry, and Perrault for all that came within the arts and sciences. Chapelain, who died before Colbert, was replaced by the Abbe Tallemant.

I once saw the Abbe de Longuerue in a great passion, about the abridgments which remain to us of the ancient historians. I cannot forgive Justin for depriving us of the great history of Pompey. Paul Diane has taken from us that of [251] Festus; Florus was near losing us that of Livy, and Cornelius Nepos the lives of illustrious men in Plutarch. I do not remember who it was of the company who answered, very sensibly, it was not to be wondered that abridgments only remained to us, and great books were lost. Before the invention of printing these were so dear to purchase, or get copied, that all a man of moderate fortune could do, was to procure abridgments of them ; even at present, now books are not so dear, the fortune of the generality of people, and the dimensions of their apartments, do not permit them to have voluminous works. But, moreover, is it not doing a service to most readers, to put into their hands clear abridgments,

methodically, and well compiled, which contain the most interesting fads. It is necessary the abbreviator should quote his authorities ; they may then be consulted in great libraries, wherein all the voluminous works are deposited. But, if the abridgment be acknowledged an exact one, it ought to be sufficient for common readers; and great books should be reserved for those whose interest it may be to decide upon some particular questions, which cannot well be thoroughly examined, without recurring to the source.

The Abbe was a good deal acquainted with the illustrious Fenelon, Archbishop of Cambray. He has always insisted that he had more wit than science, and that he was a weak theologian. In attempting to introduce wit and subtlety into his system of devotion, he wandered from his subject, and suffered some errors to creep into his work, intituled *Les Maximes des Saints*. M. Bossuet, his secret rival at court, was more learned, a greater theologian, and a more able disputant. He took advantage of M. Fenelon's [252] faux-pas to ruin him; the good Archbishop, unprepared for the blow, resolved to submit to it with a good grace; he was deprived of the cardinal's hat, which had been promised him, and to which, it is said, he was even named, in petto. In general M. de Fenelon was more mild and amiable in society, and M. Bossuet more learned, able, and even more dexterous in intrigues.

The Abbe had also seen the Cardinal de Vendome, who was legate in France, the most incapable and richest of all the legates and cardinals : he became an ecclesiastic late in life, and being a widower, some one said, on hearing of his admission into the sacred college, that it was the first college he had ever entered. When he was legate, it was even necessary to explain to him what the word legate meant, and what were his powers and functions ; but he learned no more of these than those to whom he addressed himself for information were willing he should know. He got his letters registered in the parliament ; the Attorney General joined all the restrictions he thought proper; it was inserted he should do nothing but according to the

king's good pleasure, and that his legation should continue no longer than his Majesty found it agreeable. These were restrictions made for all future legates, who are, and will for ever be obliged to submit to the same clauses and conditions. Therefore it was a stroke of policy in Lewis XIV. to decorate, with the title of legate this good, Cardinal, who did not hold that office at the expense of the clergy : being rich, he had no need of great abbeys, nor episcopal or archiepiscopal sees, which he was incapable of governing. He did not understand the Latin of the parchment and papers laid before him to sign, and spoke French like his mother, and [253] M. de Beaufort his brother, that is to say, like the language of the illiterate vulgar : he said j'allions, je venions, and could never harangue the king; either when he received the cardinal's cap, or when he had an audience as legate.

The Comte de R*** was famous at court for his stupidity. The Abbe de Longuerue, who knew him well, has told me many things of him, independently of those known to all the world; such as that of his never being able to tell which was the capital of the State of Venice; and of his having, said he was astonished the king expended so much money in getting antiques from abroad, whilst there were so many able men in France who would make them for him if he pleased. The following appears so naive, frank, and good-natured, that I cannot but relate it.—The day M. R*** married Mademoiselle de *** who was very ugly, but had a deal of wit, " Madame," said he to her, " you are not pretty, and they say I am a fool ; let us mutually overlook our defects, and we shall make the happiest man and wife in the world." She consented to the proposition, and they lived affectionately together. He was tall, handsome, and well made ; their offspring became numerous, and now figures at the court among those of the first rank.

The father of the Abbe de Longuerue served under his friend, the Marshal Fabert, whom the Abbe, when young, had sometimes seen as commander upon the frontiers of Champagne, the Abbe's country. Fabert was asthmatic, and died of a final stoppage of respiration in the night. The

people of Sedan and its environs were persuaded, that the devil had strangled him. However ridiculous, and absurd this opinion may be, [254] it was founded upon the astonishing fortune the Marshal had made, and upon what he said himself, not quite publicly, but to his friends and confidants, who repeated it to others. He believed firmly in judicial astrology, and affected he had been previously informed of whatever had befallen him. He was the son of a bookseller at Metz, who, however, had arrived at the dignity of maitre echevin, or mayor of the city. The Marshal was, at first, a private soldier, and distinguished himself on so many perilous occasions that he acquired, among his comrades, the reputation of a sorcerer, who charmed cannon and musket-balls, and prevented them from touching him. Every action, from which he retired with fortune and honour, procured him additional rank ; so that at the age of rather more than forty years, he was captain of the guards, and a general officer. He never lost his firmness in whatever situation the army or troop he commanded, or his own person might be, he had always the coup d'oeil, just and unerring, to judge of the step it was necessary he should take, and of the remedy to be applied to any difficulty in other respects he was incapable of forming a regular plan of campaign, as his views were not extensive; but he accomplished every commission with which he was charged. There was, probably, some policy in his manner of declaring he knew by magic or astrology all that, was to happen, and, that he was sure never to fall in battle, or during the war : in fact he lived for some years after the peace of the Pyrenees.

The soldiers had a convincing proof of his not being invulnerable, for he had a thigh broken at the liege of Turin : all the surgeons were for cutting it off: M. de Turenne, under whom [255] he served, exhorted him to suffer this operation: he answered that he would not die by piece-meal, and that death should have him altogether or not at all : he smiled at the same time, and said he knew he should get well of his wound ; he was fortunate enough to do so. He never won a pitched battle, but he saved, several times, the king's army, which had been drawn into difficult situations : he took Stenay in the presence of Lewis XIV.

who thus made under him his first campaign. Another conquest, not less important was that of the Chateau of Clermont, Argonne, capital of the little country of the Clermontois; it was looked upon as impregnable, and the reducing of it is still esteemed a prodigy. As soon as he had taken possession of it he ordered it to be rased, in which he acted judiciously, because it was an advanced post, which gave entry to the enemy into Champagne. Fabert was generally thought to be one of the most honest men in the world; his disinterestedness and modesty, on several occasions, were worthy of ancient Rome. He was not unlearned; he knew at least, the ancient Greek and Latin historians, and might have observed therein, that the great generals of antiquity had sometimes made the soldiers believe they had to do with gods and daemons.

The Abbe de Longuerue knew another marshal, much less estimable than Fabert : this was the Marshal d'Albret de Mioffens. It was only by making his court to Queen Anne of Austria and Cardinal Mazarine, that he had arrived at that dignity, without having ever distinguished himself in war. He was no more than a spurious relation of the House of Albret ; but finding himself crowned with riches and honours, he had [256] set up a false pretension to a legitimate descent. He got a certain abbe to compose him a genealogy, whose falsehood was so easily discovered that it was generally laughed at. The Marshal was a very idle talker; some years before his death he took it into his head to be in love with Madame de Cornuel, who lived to a very great age, and to whom many witticisms are attributed. He courted her for a long time, but, at length, perceiving his assiduity was in vain, he ceased visiting her. The lady, who cared little about him, said jocosely ; " In truth I am sorry he has left me, for I began to hearken to him."

I know but few more noble expressions, and worthy the age of Lewis XIV. when every body prided themselves upon being courtiers, than those of M. de Chamillart to M. de Beauvilliers, who was charged from the king to tell him to retire to his estate of Etang. The Duke having put on a melancholy countenance, began by assuring him that he

was extremely sorry to be the bearer of a very disagreeable piece of news : "What, Sir," answered M. de Chamillart, " is the king ill ? Has any thing disagreeable happened to the royal family ?" " No, Sir," said the Duke. " That being the case," replied he, it my fears are removed." M. de Beauvilliers then executed his commission, and M. Chamillart retired quietly to Etang, between St. Cloud and Versailles: he survived Lewis XIV. six years, and died in 17 21.

The Father Bouhours was amiable in society, spoke and wrote with purity, for which reason the best things he has written are his Remarks upon the French Language; his style was otherways languid, by paying too much attention to it : his erudition was not great, and his grand defect [257] was want of taste.; but his rage was to write upon that subject ; such are his Maniere de Juger les Ouvrages d'Esprit, and his Pensees Ingenieuses., He was mistaken in many articles in the first of these works, and has introduced several false and bad thoughts into the second ; but these books would be useful, and worth reading, if they had produced, nothing but the excellent criticism intituled, Sentiments de Cleante, by Barbier d'Aucourt. It. is not the first time that criticisms of certain books have been found more useful than, the work itself, because they prescribe rules for taste. Therefore a journal judiciously composed, would be of the greatest utility, because it would not only point out to us good books, and those we ought to read entirely, but the defects of others, and in what they consist.

The Abbe de Longuerue has left a disciple whom I see frequently, and who is, moreover, one of my intimate friends; this is the Abbe Alary : as he will never read what I ant going to write, I will give my sentiments of him without reserve. He made his way into the world, under the protection and merit of the Abbe de Longuerue, with whom he passed his youth, and wishes to make people believe, that, like another Elisha, that modern Elijah left him his mantle, his wit, and his memory. He does not, however, possess near so much knowledge as his master. He was received into the Academe Francoise in 1723, an

honour which the Abbe de Longuerue had disdained. In the early infancy of Monsieur le Dauphin, the Abbe Alary was appointed preceptor to this prince, that is, he was charged with teaching him, to read, whilst the royal infant was yet in the hands of women. However, when the Dauphin was put under the care of men, the Abbe Alary had no part [258] in the learned education of the heir to the crown. I believe some suspicions of ambition and intrigue in his character, were prejudicial to him.

The Abbe had formed a little establishment, the particulars of which being already unknown to many people, will soon be forgotten by all the world ; they are, however, worthy of being preserved. His establishment was a kind of club, like those in England, or a political society, perfectly free, composed of persons who liked to reason upon what passed, and could jointly give their opinions without fear of interruption, or any bad consequences, because they know each other well, and the persons admitted to an audience. This society was called the Entre-sol, because the place in which the members assembled was an entre-sol; [*A floor between the ground and first floor, almost seven feet high.] in which the Abbe lodged. It was furnished with every thing necessary; good chairs, a good fire in the winter, and, in summer, the windows opened upon a pretty garden. They neither dined nor supped there, but drank tea in winter, and lemonade, and refreshing liquors in summer : the Gazettes of France, Holland, and even the English papers were always upon the table. In a word, it was a genteel coffee-house. I went there regularly, and frequently found persons of distinction, who had held some of the first employs, both at home and abroad. Even M. de Torcy went there sometimes. This coterie, so respectable in appearance, finished in an unexpected manner. Some differences arose between the courts of London and Madrid : Lord Chesterfield, the English ambassador, finding Cardinal Fleury refractory to the reasons of his court, thought the nation might be made to understand [259] what the minister could not be made to comprehend. Having learned that a political club existed in the neighbourhood of the Luxembourg, in the apartments of the Abbe Alary,

he demanded an audience in the *Entre-sol*, went there, and pleaded the cause of the English against the Spaniards, before the members who assisted, who, as it may be supposed, applauded his eloquence, but decided upon nothing. The Cardinal, informed of this adventure, forbade, in the king's name, the club to assemble, and, from that time, the Abbe Alary never appeared at court. He lived at home, in tranquillity, and was very assiduous in the meetings of the academy, however; without composing any work. He had the priory of Gournay sur-Marne, a few leagues from Paris : this benefice is pretty good, and the priory house fluids in a delightful situation. The Abbe leads there an happy, and even delicious life; with all proper decency, he receives amiable women, to whom he is complaisant, and who, when he becomes old, will willingly be the same to him. In my opinion his manner of living is to be envied.

[260] ESSAY XLV.

On Absence of Mind.

Habitual Absence of Mind is a real proof of folly, or, at least, of great inattention. How happens it therefore, that there are people who pride themselves upon this absence, and think to assume an air of importance and capacity. Instead of paying attention to what is said to them, they wish to appear taken up with quite another thing this is, in truth, contemptible. The only pretence such persons can have is, that their pretended Absence prevents them from giving immediate answers to embarrassing questions; but this is at the expence of their reputation. I like those better who hearken attentively, and reply slowly.—This was the ancient method of persons who discussed important affairs ; but it is now no longer in fashion. French naivete cannot accommodate itself to it, and the multiplicity of affairs with which our ministers are taken up, do not give them sufficient time. It is in Spain, only, where the national gravity permits people to speak and write with

circumspection, and where men can consider at leisure what they have to say, or commit to paper. I knew a Spanish ambassador, in France, who, importuned by questions incessantly put to him, [261] to which he was required to answer immediately, and, finding that even our young nobility sometimes let slip unreasonable expressions, which he would have thought himself obliged to animadvert upon, if he had appeared to hear them, took the resolution of declaring himself deaf, and passed four or five years at Paris and Versailles, telling every body he was extremely hard of hearing. By this method he frequently dissimulated, and made people repeat their questions two or three times, which gave him time to prepare his answer. Finally, when, he had his audience of leave, it was remarked that his ear was very fine, and his artifice was discovered when he had no longer occasion to make use of it.

I knew a woman of a certain age, whose slow, but dignified manner of speaking, even in ordinary conversation, gave her the reputation of woman of great sense. Every thing she said was looked upon as so many sentences and apophthegms.

[262] ESSAY XLVI.

On Domestic Economy.

It is at present required of masters and mistresses of families, not to appear too much taken up with the care of doing the honours of their tables, &c. Nothing appears more ridiculous than to see the lady of the house torment herself, give her keys to servants to fetch different things she has in her own particular keeping, which she distributes, with circumspection, on great occasions ; afterwards pressing people to eat of what she thinks good, as if they had it not in their power to have as good things set before them every day. These manners are so impolite,

provincial and rustical that they are even banished from the genteel citizens houses of Paris, from the provinces and chateaux. A house should be so well regulated, that by a sign, or a word, from the master or mistress, every thing should be in its place, and the company well served. But if, in the course of the day, they should be disengaged from company, the mistress should reserve to herself moments of recollection, in private, with her servants, when she should reckon the expences of the preceding day, and give her orders for the present and succeeding ones ; should know what every thing costs, and what becomes of it. In houses where masters and mistresses are too elevated to descend to [263] these minutiae, a trusty and faithful steward ought to be charged with it; but, as in a well-managed theatre, the machinery and decorations should be so well prepared as to make every thing appear at the moment of representation, to be the effect of the stroke of a magic wand.

I know a good citizen's house, the master of which is rich and easy, wherein the common order of things is reverted. The lady commonly charges herself with the daily expences ; there the contrary is the case ; the mistress of the house prides herself upon her wit; and one great means the employs to gain a brilliant reputation is, to give regularly, on certain days, a dinner, on others a supper, to those who are reputed to have most wit and information. The fortune of her husband is equal to these expences ; he kindly gives into them with a good grace, and is as well pleased as the company with the elegance of her taste. But, although he seems not to be interested in the dissertations at which he is present, asks no questions, and never says a word, I know, from good authority, that he amuses himself with them. How do we know that he does not listen as a critic ; it is certain, that this man, who says not a word, except in helping his friends at table, in the most, polite manner, who seems, in the house, as an humble friend to the lady, and to give orders about anything, spends all his mornings in regulating the family expences, and writing out the bill of fare for dinner : he scolds his servants when they fail in the least part of their duty, and prescribes them precise and exact laws for the future; his people tremble

before him; he takes the liberty to reprimand his wife, when, by her fault, the expenses are too great, or the dinner is not good enough.

[264] There is nothing which a philosophical observer may not turn to advantage; and this gentleman might find, in the study of these little domestic affairs, an interest of considerable magnitude.

ESSAY XLVII.

The Effects of amorous Connection on Character.

After treating, in this volume, of so many different matters and objects, I am now going to speak of love and women: but I will not dwell long upon either of them ; for I think, like Madame Cornuel, who said, we cannot be long in love, without doing foolish things, nor speak much of it, without saying silly ones.

It is difficult, in every period of life, to inspire a real passion : but it is easy to make most women conceive a momentary one ; many things contribute to this; a fine figure, the appearance of strength and vigour, the graces, wit, or the reputation of it, complaisance, and, often, a decided tone, and light manners, ambitious ideas, and, finally, interested views ; with so many resources, it is almost impossible that every one should not find means to gratify his inclinations [265] during his youth ; but, in a riper age, it is necessary to fix the affections. If we will not renounce every species of gallantry, it is necessary to accustom ourselves early to the sweet habitude of living with one whom we love and esteem ; without which, we fall into the most gloomy apathy, or insupportable agitation. The habitude of which I speak, is more agreeable and solid, when founded upon the permanent affections of the

mind; but this is not so absolutely necessary as not to be dispensed with. It is certain that the cares of a woman are always more agreeable to an old man than those of a relation or friend of his own sex ; it seems to be the wish and intention of nature that the two sexes should live and die together.

We become insensible of a settled habitude; and, as we do not perceive that a mistress grows old, and becomes less handsome, we do not observe that her way of thinking becomes our own; and, our reason subjected to hers; though sometimes less enlightened. We insensibly, sacrifice our fortune to her ; and this is a necessary consequence of the resignation we have made of our reason.

Men sometimes pass over the infidelities of women, because they are not perfectly convinced of them, and that a blind confidence is a necessary consequence of their seduction : but if, unfortunately, they come to the knowledge of them, it is impossible for a man, sincerely attached to a woman, not to be susceptible of jealousy. This jealousy takes a tinge of the character of the, person who is affected with it. The mild man becomes afflicted, falls ill, and dies; is a repentance, which he is always disposed to believe sincere, does not console him : the choleric man breaks out into rage ; and, in the first moments, it is not known how far this may carry him ; but men of this disposition are soonest appealed, and most frequently to be deceived.

[266] Pecuniary interest should never be the basis of an amorous connexion : it renders it shameful, or at least suspicious : money, says Montague, being the source of concubinage. But when a tender union is well formed, interest, like sentiment, becomes common ; every thing is mutual ; and there is but one fortune for two sincere lovers. If they be equally honest, and incapable of making a bad use of it, this is just and natural ; but frequently the complaisance of one, makes him or her partake too much of the misfortunes and errors of the other.

Love should never have any thing to do with affairs : it ought to live on pleasures only: but how is it possible to resist the solicitations of a beloved object, who, though she ought not to participate in affairs which she has not prudence or courage enough to manage, yet having always, for a pretext, her interest in your reputation, welfare and happiness, how is it possible to resist an amiable woman, who attacks with such weapons?

Some ladies have a real, others a borrowed reputation ; that of the first is pure and unspotted, founded on the principles of religion, consequently the only genuine one ; it belongs to women really attached to their duty, and who have never sailed in the least point of it, whether they have had the good fortune to love their husbands, who have returned their affection ; or whether, by an effort of virtue, they have been faithful to a man whom they have not loved nor were beloved by.— There is another reputation, unknown to religion, which delicate morality, although purely human, does not admit, but which the world, more indulgent, will sometimes except as good ; that founded upon the good choice of lovers, or rather, of a lover; for multiplicity is always indecent.—We are so disposed to think that each loves his likeness, [267] that we judge of the character of men and women by those of their own sex with whom they have formed an intimacy ; but infinitely more by the persons for whom they conceive a serious attachment. Many a man of wit has established the reputation of his mistress, without composing madrigals for her, but by making known the passion with which she had inspired him; many a woman of merit has created or established the reputation of him whom she has adopted her chevalier. After all, it is more dangerous to solicit than to decline this kind of reputation: it happens more frequently that a man loses himself by making a bad choice, than he adds to his same by making a good one.

If the public are indulgent to the attachments of simple individuals, they are much more so to those of kings and

people in place, when they think them real, and do not suspect in them either ambition, intrigue, or motives of interest. All France approved of the love of Charles VII. for Agnes Sorel, because she had the courage to say to this Prince that, unless he recovered his kingdom; he was not worthy of her affection. The Parisians applauded the love of Henry IV. For La Belle Gabrielle, and sung with pleasure the songs this monarch made for her ; because, knowing her to be handsome, and of a good disposition, they imagined she should inspire the king with sentiments of benevolence.

Never did a woman love a man more sincerely than Madame de la Villiere loved Lewis XIV. She never quitted him but for God alone ; and, swelled with vanity as that monarch was, he could not complain of this rivalry ; so much the less, as the Supreme Being had but the remains of the heart of his mistress, and, perhaps never possessed it entirely.

I have heard an anecdote of Madame de Valliere, which I do not remember to have seen in [268] print. This lady was so modest, and had so little ambition, that she had never told the king she had a brother, much less had the ever asked any favour for him. He was still young, and had made his first campaign among the cadets of the king's household. Lewis XIV. reviewing his troops, saw his mistress smile in a friendly manner at a young man, who, on his part, bowed to her, with an air of familiarity. In the evening the King asked, in a severe and irritated tone of voice, who this young man was. Madame de la Villiere was at first confused, but afterwards told his Majesty it was her brother. The King, having assured himself of it, conferred distinguished favours upon the young gentleman, who was father of the first Duke de la Villiere, whose widow and children are still alive.

The King's intrigue with Madame de Montespan, was not of a nature to be approved of so much as that he had with Madame de la Valliere; yet the nation did not complain,

because it was thought the love of this lady procured the public magnificent feasts and elegant amusements. The following verses were a good deal sung at that time.

Ah ! quelle est charmante
Notre aimable cour ;
Sous le meme tente
On voit tour a tour.

La gloire et l'amour,
Conquete brillante
Et fete gallante
Marquent chaque jour.

On the contrary, the public were a good deal disgusted with the amours of the King and Madame de Maintenon, although more decent, and that a secret marriage had rendered them legitimate. It was observed that a love, conceived when both parties were in years, afforded a ridiculous spectacle: Moreover, Madame de Maintenon meddled with the affairs of government ; [269] and it was when the most interfered with them, that things fell into decline, and that Lewis XIV. began to experience misfortunes, which were all laid to her charge.

When the late Duke of Orleans, who was Regent, fell in love with Mademoiselle de Sery, he was not censured on account of it. The Duchess of Orleans, natural daughter to the King, was rather beautiful, but she was not amiable; Mademoiselle de Sery, on the contrary, was very much so. She had a son, and it was predicted of him that he would one day become Duke of Dunois. We see him at present, in Paris, under the title of Chevalier d'Orleans, Grand Prior of France. He has not fulfilled what was expected of him ; yet he has wit, and is, in many respects, amiable.

In process of time the Regent fell into such an irregularity of conduct, that the public were shocked at it. It was necessary for him to have many other brilliant and estimable qualities to be pardoned so great a defect s but

people were so much disposed to indulgence for him: that his affection for Madame de Parabere was approved of, because it was supposed she really loved him, and that he loved her, although he was frequently unfaithful to her.

Exterior decency is generally admired, and princes and men of distinction ought to do nothing to disgust the public; but, right or wrong, it is but too true, that in the end, this public assumes the authority of censuring, without delicacy, every fault : woe to them who are the first objects of gross scandal ; they become the victims to its rage : the public judges and punishes them for it ; or, at least, hoots at, and despises them ; but, when the number of the guilty increase to a certain degree, it is found, that although hisses are sufficient to condemn bad pieces, they are not rods [270] enough for those men who deserve to be lashed : they then become tolerated, nothing more is said, and, what is worse than all, a resolution is sometimes taken to imitate them. It must be acknowledged that the temptation to sin is very great, when we are sure to do it with impunity ; and that people are made easy upon this head, when they are sheltered from reproach and ridicule.

ESSAY XLVIII.

On the Method of Studying, Reading, and selecting from Authors.

I return with pleasure to the favourite subject of my reflections, because it is that of my talk and amusement ; namely, reading and study. There are two sorts of them in the cabinet ; the one belongs to our professions and functions : therefore the magistrate ought to study the general principles of jurisprudence, and give the greatest attention to affairs submitted to his decision. The minister, of whatever kind his administration may be, ought to study the principles of the object committed to his care,

and apply them as occasions require. The father of a family is obliged to think of what may secure or encrease his fortune, to take care of his property, and keep an account with himself as well as with others. These are necessary studies and occupations, and must not be neglected. But there is another kind of study, merely pleasurable, free in its object, and which may serve as a relaxation from serious and necessary ones. There are people happy enough not to be obliged to employ themselves but in studies of that [271] nature. Women, especially, if they be fortunate enough to amuse themselves with reading, cannot read too much ; by a little method, and a proper choice of books, they will find infinite remedies against lassitude, and abundant sources of instruction.

Life, for a person who wishes to be virtuous and amiable, is a continual study. We improve in society by living and conversing with those whose whole conversations and examples are worth hearing and imitating : we learn to discover and avoid the ridicule of certain persons, whom we but too frequently meet with, but with whom we ought to form no connection. However this study of society cannot fill up all the moments of life ; it often experiences forced interruptions, longer than we would wish for. It is then we ought to apply ourselves to study in solitude; that is to say, to reading: but we must know how to read to advantage ; for doing it without method, choice or taste, is a real loss to the cultivation of the mind ; it serves, at most, to fill up some idle moments ; and, when we read in this manner; although we may have a good memory, we neither learn nor retain any thing.

For my part, my method of reading with advantage, books of all kinds, foreign to my profession, is as follows. In the first place, I recollect the first principles of all the sciences I learned in my youth ; afterwards I consider in which of these sciences I wish to gain a more extensive knowledge; I do not seek it in didactic books, in treatises made precisely to instruct; such kind of reading would form too profound a study, and require too much application, in which people

who quitted other serious studies for it, would find no relaxation : I seek for books which contain the history of each science, the progress it has made in different ages, [272] and the rational deductions of authors and artists, to whom it owes its progress. I am persuaded, that by this historical study alone of the arts and sciences, a man of the world may learn as much as he wishes to know of them, and that a good Encyclopedia might be made by uniting the history of each science and art, and shewing how one derives from the other, and the relations that are between them.

My cannon is, with books whose subjects appear interesting, to read them over, and then form a general judgment of the work : afterwards, if I think it worth while, I read them a second time, make extracts of the best part of their contents, and what appears to me most novel, and criticise the principal errors into which the author may have fallen. Such is my method with books of science and history ; with respect to those of simple literature, poems, romances, &c. performances of which we must not absolutely deprive ourselves, because they are a dernier resort against the fatigue and uniformity of more serious books, I make no extracts from them, but content myself after reading them over, with writing, in a few words, my opinion upon each, to prevent those who may be tempted to read them after me, the trouble of beginning an author, by whom they would neither be amused nor entertained.

There are books of a frivolous kind, in which I sometimes find sentiments worthy of being selected ; this is what I do : although the harvest be not abundant, it is, at least, precious. Nothing is, in my opinion, more insupportable, than the continued reading of a collection of poems ; they cannot be read but at intervals; yet in taking them up frequently, till they are all read, very good things are sometimes found in them.

[273] I know no other manner of judging theatrical pieces, than by the impression they have made upon me, and I am

very careful to avoid examining whether they be according to the rules of the drama : in my opinion, there is but one thing to consider, whether there be a kind of probability in the intrigue and charmers ; if the first be interesting and the last pleasing, I think the piece a good one. If it be well written, in verse or prose, that is another advantage : but the real merit of the work does not consist therein.

The remarks I have made in reading, compose, already, several great volumes: they will not be quite useless to my son, if ever he forms a rational catalogue of his library.

A man, who has not, nor ever will read, must certainly, from his ignorance, be liable to speak absurdly, for which he will be exposed to ridicule; knowledge of the world, and the conversation of men of sense, will never shelter such a man from raillery : but, on the other hand, a man who has done nothing but read and studied, has no knowledge of the world, and who has never mixed with good company, becomes a stupid and unpolite pedant, and speaks absurdly in another manner ; for, as men learn not everything from books, so books cannot supply the knowledge of the world. The Abbe de Longuerue, whose memory and erudition I have spoken so favourably of, was himself an unpolite pedant; we are assured that Hugo Grotius, one of the most learned men at the beginning of the last century, and who was ambassador in France, about an hundred years ago, was the worst ambassador in the world. As he was ignorant of customs, he understood nothing of what passed at court ; he kept company with nobody but pedants of the university, who taught him nothing useful, and from [274] whom he could not learn the manner in which he ought to conduct himself with kings, queens, princes, and ministers. He went to the worst of all sources to seek information; but what he gathered, he wrote to the States General in fine Latin, for he could not write either in French or Dutch: both himself and his wife were objects of ridicule at the court of France, and nobody read his work, which has since been so much admired, because it contains excellent maxims of natural and public right : yet it will never be learned from this

great work, how we ought to act in negotiations : on the contrary, the letters of the President Jeannin, who was a mild and insinuating man; those of the Cardinal d'Ossat, a prudent man, who always made reason triumphant, without offending any body ;finally, those of the Comte d'Estrades, whole dispatches are so fine and sensible, as well as elegantly written, are real models to be adopted: but none ought to be servilely imitated : a public man should form a style peculiar to himself, conformable to the character with which he is invested, to the manners of the court from which he is sent, and to that where he resides. Nothing should be more avoided in dispatches than an affectation of wit, but the greatest attention should be given to expose facts in the clearest manner to his court. With respect to memoirs addressed to the court with which he has to treat, there are sometimes reasons for there being more obscure and perplexed.

I have always observed that men of the robe, employed in foreign affairs, became more amiable and polished ; and that, on the contrary, in intendancies, or provincial administrations, they contracted a stupid and impolite manner; the reason is not difficult to be conceived; an ambassador strives to make himself beloved, and the [275] intendant pretends to make himself feared : one must be a courtier, and has two courts to please; the other exercises the despotism of a single court upon its subjects.

But I am wandering too far from my proposed object : I meant to say, that to write books, equally useful and agreeable, a knowledge of the world was preferable to study. It is thus, Saint Evremond and Fontenelle have succeeded. The latter acknowledged to me one day, that he had left off reading : " I have stored my magazine," said he, " a long time ago; at present I sell my merchandize." But, to arrive at this point, three things are necessary; to read and study methodically, to have a good memory, and, finally, a good stock of wit, and a knowledge of the world. Yet we are told Bayle was wanting in the last ; but he had so much wit and information; that, on reading his works, no appearance is seen of what he was deficient in. How

much must this man have amused himself in computing his Dictionary, and his *Nouvelles de la Republique des Lettres* ! He went from object to object, and judged of every thing with liberty, superiority and ease. His Journal is the best that has been, or, perhaps, ever will be composed. Every book is there selected , thoroughly examined, and judged of in a masterly manner. If we may expect such another Journal, it must be the work of a well composed society, directed by an enlightened president : whoever should establish such a one, would render a great service to sciences and letters ; he would prevent authors from wandering, teach them how to treat their subjects, which, for the most part, they are ignorant of, and shew them the defects of their compositions, as well as those of their style. Our academies would not do too [276] much by taking this upon themselves, each according to its province; one company alone would not be sufficient : and it would still be necessary to leave to the *Mercure*, and the little hebdomadal criticisms, poetry, light literature, and romances. Perhaps there will be, some day, found, among my papers, a rational plan of this reformation of the Journals, and reflections upon the extreme utility they might be of, in composing an history of the progress of our knowledge ; the most interesting of all histories that can be written.

I have a library, rather considerable, but it is composed of books, all chosen for my own use: it is a misplaced and blameable luxury to have more books than you can read and consult; yet it is the finest, most noble, and, consequently, the most excusable of all luxuries ; I confess, if I could enjoy one, it should be this. But it is necessary, at least, to know, of what use books, which we read not ourselves, may be to others : it is both absurd and ridiculous to have such, whose only merit consists in being scarce. With respect to books which have no other recommendation than the goodness of their edition, and the elegance of binding, they are still a luxury ; but this is pardonable in those who are rich enough not to miss acquiring a good book, in the hope of having a handsome one, otherways it would be imitating the man, who, having

ruined himself in the purchase of picture-frames, was too poor to buy paintings.

When a library is limited, its composition should bespeak the profession of its proprietor : it would be ridiculous to find nothing but poems and romances in that of a magistrate, and not to find in that of a military man either Polybius, or Caesar's Commentaries.

[277] Serious studies require, in those who pursue them, an absolute exemption from all domestic concerns. It is on this account that a monastic life is the most proper for study, because those who consecrate themselves to it are always sure of wanting for nothing, either for the moment, or when they shall become incapable of labour from hence it may be concluded, that if ever the Monks be destroyed, erudition and instruction will suffer considerably. To this it will be answered, that there are many orders of Monks who neither study, nor apply to any thing ; to which may be replied, that government should rather strive to make them useful than destroy them.

It is a great satisfaction to a man who reads and studies, to have a person with whom he may reason upon what he has read : *scire tuum nihil est, nisi te scire hoc sciat alta*, says a Latin poet; but it is necessary to chuse those with whom you wish to reason upon what you know and have just read; for if, unfortunately, you fall into the hands of talkative censors, those eternal disputers, it would be better never to have begun a communication of ideas in your life, than to have addressed yourself to such people. If you apply to a fool, the satisfaction is still as little. In such unfortunate circumstances, the best way is to keep to yourself what you know.

Forced studies are tiresome and fatiguing ; on the contrary, those which are voluntary, slow almost insensibly. I know a woman, who, having been a long time intimately acquainted with a man, wrote to him almost

every day, even when they were in the same town, giving him an account how she spent her time ; what she had read, and communicating to him her most secret thoughts.—The gentleman died, and his heirs were polite enough to return to the lady all her letters. Being [278] one of my particular friends, she had confidence enough in me to let me read them, and even gave them into my possession ; I perused them with all imaginable pleasure ; they were full of wit, of thoughts and reflections, equally sensible and just, and were arranged in progressive order. I put them together, and they made four volumes in quarto ; after this I paid her a visit, and made her repeat what she had many times said to me, that she could not conceive how it was possible to have patience enough to write a book. "Well, Madam," said I, " know that you have written a considerable one, better than most of those we esteem, which I have brought for your inspection." I put immediately into her hand her four volumes in quarto. "There," said I, " is something more valuable than the Letters of Madame de Sevigny, and, perhaps, than the Essays of Montagne." She received my compliment modestly, and was obliged to acknowledge that it is possible to write a book, almost without knowing it. I gave her back her four volumes; but, as I am a great transcriber of notes and extracts, I copied from different parts of the work, about one volume, which I preserve as being precious.

Montagne learned Latin without a master, at least without rudiments, by habitude and rote.—I knew the time when the scholars of the Jesuits college were obliged to speak Latin to the servants about them, when they asked for the most common necessities. The Latin, spoken on those occasions, was certainly bad ; it was called Kitchen Latin : but, such as it was, it created an habitude of speaking that language. This custom has since been left off; it was pretended, that it served only to accustom the children to make solecisms. I have, however, found it useful to those who, travelling in Germany, Hungary, Bohemia, and Poland, [279] stood in need of Latin to make themselves understood. The habitude they had contracted when young, helped them over many difficulties, whilst those

who go from college at present, are puzzled with them, although they have made Latin versions, themes and poetry, and have even gained premiums. As for Greek, it is useless to think of speaking or understanding it with accuracy.--You may know their sentiments without translating books from this dead language, because it is already done. But it is necessary, at least, to know how to read Greek, to possess the first elements of the grammar, and especially the Greek roots, upon which Messieurs de Port Royal have written an excellent work. It is incredible how useful the knowledge of the Greek roots is in learning the etymology of most terms of arts and science. If our language, in its first barbarous simplicity, be not derived from the Greek, it must, at least, be acknowledged that two thirds of the words we make use of at present, come therefrom, either directly or indirectly.

There are didactic books so tiresome and disagreeable, although very exact, that they may justly be called deterrents from study, as we say old and ugly women are antidotes to love. Young people should be spared the fatigue of such books, by substituting others, which inspire curiosity and desire. To interest the reader is the great art every author of a book should study. It ought to be the end and object of him who writes upon science, of the historian, the inventor of romances, and the writer of comedies. But this is not all, it must be kept up to the end of the work: *boc opus, bic labor est*.

People to whom I have communicated my extracts, and some of my remarks upon different objects, have reproached me with not having a style [280] of my own ; to which I answered, what signifies it, if I have the style of the subject to which my attention is directed ? it is principally to this style one ought to be attached. In writing upon every kind of subject , it is necessary to observe what an author of a comedy is particularly attentive to, giving each personage the language proper to him ; and the most essential of all is clearness of expression, and justness of thought. It must not be believed that imagination extends the ideas, it is the judgment ; because this either elevates itself; or descends, in a right line, from consequence to consequence; whereas the imagination moves by fits and

starts, and wanders, for want of attaching itself, to a fixed object.

There are two manners of cultivating the memory; one is by learning by heart, long passages from poems, entire harangues, and pages of cyphers : with this kind of memory wonderful exertions are made, but very useless ones : I call the other kind of memory, by judgment. By this sort of memory we retain the sense and order of things; is this be not a real memory, it is surely a good one ; and by which we are best instructed. It applies to what we have seen and read, and fatigues less than the first, for we retain every thing without perceiving it, and, as it were, without willing to do it.

Men of great genius have no need of reading to conceive grand and fine ideas, and to form projects and plans not only brilliant, but sometimes very good and useful. Yet reading is still of great service to them, to rectify their thoughts, and shew them, by the example of those who have had some of the same kind, to what inconveniences they would be exposed by pursuing them with too much ardour and precipitation. It has long since been said, that history has anticipated experience ; that experience is necessary to those who might conceive [281] projects too vast, and be carried too far by their ideas.

The epistolary style is that most necessary, for women. Those who are disposed to write well in this way, have no need of taking pains to succeed. They must even take care not to lose that easy, natural, and rather soft turn, sometimes witty, sometimes voluptuous, which is truly the style of women. As a lady must have neither an appearance or a manner too masculine, a look too bold, or her head too elevated, so her ideas and expressions must not be too aspiring, nor her style what is called lofty; it must always appear as if she wrote rapidly, and her phrases should not be overcharged. I do not believe there are any women who, after having written a work or series of letters, ever gave

them to be corrected by some confidential male or female friend, whom they thought capable of writing better than themselves. It is either necessary to entrust to a secretary the composition of a whole work, or that the author, himself, should revile what he has done, and, after having corrected the first rough draught, look it over again, rectify, and give it the last touches ; otherwise he will run the risk of giving the work to the public in a patched style, which will evidently appear to be by two different hands.

The style of Voiture, which was formerly in great reputation, is now justly decried. He is a buffoon, who has some wit, but without elevation or justness. Balsac, on the contrary, whose style is equally antiquated, had an elevation of idea and expression. People who know how to make the most of every thing, might still profit from Balsac, by some thoughts and turns of phrases. But, I must again repeat, that the best rule for style is to adapt it to the subject upon which we have to treat. I read with pleasure the letters of a [282] celebrated Intendant of the late reign ; his name was Bagnols : they were justly looked upon as true models for correspondence in public affairs. They were short, without the least dryness, and were clear and nervous. A stupid subaltern could not mistake the orders the Intendant gave, nor refuse to conform to them ; and, a better proof is, a man of sense could not fail to admire them, and be convinced by the reasons they contained ; for he never gave an order without assigning a reason.

I now return to memory, to speak of those who have none at all. There are people who, to aid the little they are possessed of, are obliged to make an agenda of every thing they have to carry into execution. A certain Intendant of Tours, who lived at the beginning of the present century, was famous for this. His agenda was frequently stolen from him, and read, and laughed at in his presence. There was found written in one of them : " I have taken a resolution to shave myself in future, because my servants are butchers, who flay me." And, a little lower down, "I will say God's death no more, this is an improper expression for a magistrate and an intendant; it is better to

say dog's death." M*** was not, however, quite so singular in his memorandums of this kind, as a man, who went frequently from Paris to Lyons, and who wrote in his agenda, " to remember to be married in passing by Nevers."

Notwithstanding all I have just said against agenda, I make use of them sometimes to advantage; it is not that I want memory, but I have not one exact enough to remember, at the appointed times, all I have to do in the day. This kind of memory is very rare; agenda supplies the want of it, but I never think of committing to paper my resolutions and rules of conduct. I [283] know a very learned man, and of great application, who makes very useful researches, and reduces them wonderfully to order, with the pen in his hand ; but the poor man has neither wit nor memory. I have learned from this oddity a very singular circumstance : A man of quality wished to have his genealogy; he applied to the person of whom I have just spoken, knowing him to be learned, exact, and fond of employing himself in that way. M. B*** did him this service With the greatest pleasure he turned over historians and genealogists, made extracts from some old titles, and took copies of them ; finally, after six weeks labour, he gave every éclaircissement required. Two years afterwards, a man of the same family, but of another branch of it, not far removed from the former, not knowing who had drawn up the genealogy of his cousin, begged M. B*** to make him one also. The good man set to work immediately, and found the same proofs, but without recollecting any thing more than to have had occasion to read the same papers, but when, and for why, he had forgot. The two cousins having communicated to each other their genealogies, found them alike, mentioned respectively the author, and found him to be the same man.

I have read, in an eulogium of the Abbe de Louvois, that he was brought up, according to the wishes of his father, who was then high in power, and neglected nothing to make his son an able man. The most learned people

devised methods on purpose to teach him every thing in a short space of time. " He was fed", says his panegyrist, " with the elixir and quintessence of every kind of science, as the richest and most delicate are with strong broths, juices of meat, and essences of the best fruits." The comparison [284] is a good one ; but, as good stomachs are necessary to those who are fond of such rich cookery, to digest all the aliments, reduced to small quantities, so it requires a well organised head to retain the principles of all the sciences, reduced to abridgment. But the person in whom this first education has succeeded, need give himself no more trouble for the rest of his life, to become the most learned man in the world : every thing conveys to him instruction, encreases the mass of his knowledge, and fixes itself upon a basis already established in his head ; he cannot hold a new conversation, nor open a book, without finding a new source of information. It is, perhaps, in this manner, that people at court, appear to know, and really do know every thing, without: seemingly, ever having learned any thing.

The English have very little style, and still less method; but they have strong and elevated thoughts : accustomed to overlook prejudices in matters of policy and government, their daring genius is the same in every respect. Their pleasantries are neither mild nor cautious; their satire is violent, but sometimes very delightful. We are already acquainted with Dean Swift, one of their most ingenious and satirical authors. His work is well enough translated into French. It is generally more easy to render English pleasantries into other languages, than to translate for instance, Italian ones into French, and ours into any language whatsoever, because English satire falls upon things, and the persons are well described, and in very striking colours ; whereas the Italians play upon words, and the French flutter round the object at which they laugh ; they joke and play with it as a cat does with a mouse ; consequently these pleasantries are very difficult to understand and render. Nothing can be better [285] written, or more agreeable to read, than the papers of the, Spectator. If the English had many like this, we could not be too anxious to become acquainted with them : but I foresee that we shall have many bad translations of this

first and excellent English author; that from hence a new taste of literature will be established among us; that the French, who never know how to check their enthusiasm, will Anglify themselves, and that we shall lose many of our graces in acquiring some of their spirit, ideas, and liberty of thinking and writing. Voltaire has already said, that when men think forcibly, they express themselves forcibly also; this is true ; but strength of thought maybe carried too far, and become equally rude and disgusting in ideas and style.

ESSAY XLIX.

On the Literary Character of Voltaire.

Voltaire, with whom I have always associated, since we were together at college; whom I love personally, and esteem in many respects, is not only a great and harmonious versifier, but what every body does not know as well as I do; a great thinker. His abode in England elevated his soul, and strengthened his ideas : he is capable of publishing them courageously, having the same strength of mind which some authors have had, who dared to publish what nobody before dared to write moreover he has a gracefulness of style, sufficient to express and make pleasing certain [286] ideas, which would disgust, were they rendered by any other person. The heroic trumpet, which he put to his mouth in the *Henriade*, became an agreeable pipe in some of his fugitive pieces. It is not uniform, but he knew how to vary its tone ; perhaps all he wants as a poet, is imagination ; but this is, at present, very difficult to have, there have been so many people full of it, that whosoever would produce any thing quite new, would create ridiculous and frightful monsters. There are two parts in tragedy, intrigue, and that of detail and versification. Voltaire does not triumph in the first, but he is superior in the second ; and a proof that this is the principal one is, the difference between the success of his theatrical pieces, and those of other authors, such as la

Grange Chancel, who excels in all the cable of his tragedies, but which are pitifully written. Voltaire, in details, is neither so great as Corneille, or so tender and amiable as Racine ; perhaps he is not even equal to Crebillon; but strokes of wit, and delightful poetry, are so frequent in his pieces, that the spectator or reader has not time to examine whether any thing better might he produced. The prose of Voltaire is fully equal to his verses, and he speaks as well as he writes. Nothing can be more clear than his phrases, they are contracted without stiffness; no unnatural period, nor rhetorical figure; all his adjectives agree with their substantives : finally, his prose is a model which his contemporaries strive always to imitate, without wishing to acknowledge it. His History of Charles XII. may have some defects, considered as an history; his Lettres Philosophiques, contain bold thoughts and criticisms, which certainly are not always just ; but his style is admirable. Voltaire is only forty years of age ; if he lives to be [287] old, he will write a great deal more, and be the author of works upon which much will be to be said both for and against. Heaven grant that the magic of his style may not give credit to false opinions and dangerous ideas; that he may not dishonour this charming style, in prose and in verse, by applying it to works whose subjects may be unworthy of the painter and the colouring; that this great writer may not produce a multitude of bad copyists; and that he may not become the chief of a sect, to which it will happen, as to many others, that the disciples will mistake the intention of their patriarch.

ESSAY L.

The Declamation of the Actors of the Theatre Francois defended.

I have frequently heard the Actors of the Theatre Francois reproached with their singing manner of speaking; this reproach is, in my opinion, ill founded. What is declamation, especially in verse, if it be not singing ? There is no

harm in singing poetry, or animated prose, which is cadenced, and ought to be harmonious; but the singing must be just, and conformable to the true sense of the words : I do not speak of little comedies in prose; they ought to begin in the tone of conversation. But as kings, princesses, generals of armies, or men of the world, speak not in verse, especially in rhyme, tragic verse must be declaimed with animation and cadence. The Roman orators pronounced their discourses in the forum, [288] with a flute accompaniment, which regulated and modulated their tones ; so musical scenes ought to be nothing more than a fine noted declamation, and better supported by an accompaniment, well adapted to the sense of the words and situation of the actors. Even the symphonies, executed in the orchestra, ought to have a subject, which is, I believe, called a motive, to signify and indicate something. It is also necessary that the music of a scene in French should be composed for words written in that language, without which it varies from the sense and object. Lulli, although a foreigner, was careful to consult on this head, all the authors of the words of his operas ; and it is perhaps owing to this, that some scenes of their dramas, being well rendered and sung, interest us so much. Destouches and Campra were equally attentive in this particular; it appears that Rameau, a new composer, very estimable, learned and agreeable, in other respects, neglects it, in which he does very wrong ; he spoils the representation, and makes it unnatural. Our music still retains something of the age of Lewis XIV. it is noble and expressive; let us not render it unnatural, or —upon reflection, do—Gentlemen, do with it as you please. After all, it is well worth while to dispute about, to discuss a thing, upon which every person ought to decide according to its effect, and the sensation it gives him ; in this case it may well be said, that we must not dispute upon taste. I have just declared mine in music, and especially in lyric scenes; but let every one judge of it in his own way, and feel such sensations as are most agreeable to himself. It is, at most, for men of the art to discuss the principles from whence these sensations result : it is sufficient for the generality of mankind to feel them.

FINIS.